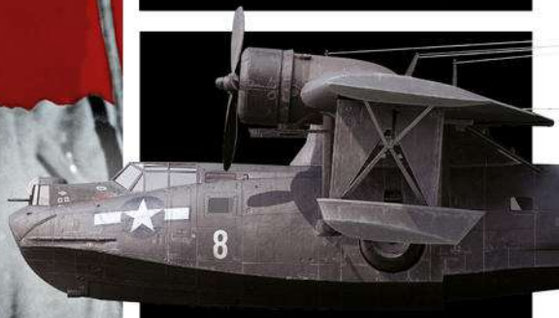
BRITAIN'S BEST MILITARY HISTORY MAGAZINE

HISTORY of WAR

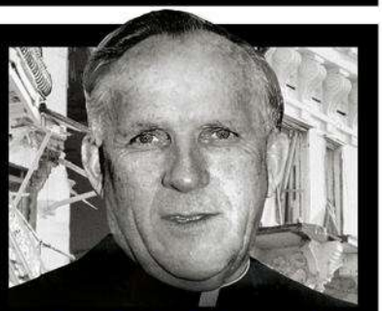
CHECHEN WARS
Horrors of Putin's first bloodbath

RAF'S FIRST VC
True story of Ireland's unlikely pilot ace

BATTLE OF ORTONA
Inside the bloody street fighting of Canada's 'Little Stalingrad'



PBY CATALINA
In the cockpit of the Allies' iconic U-Boat hunters



IRA'S WAR PRIEST
How Father Patrick Ryan armed and funded terror campaigns

THE FIRST KAMIKAZE
Read how zealous militarism and catastrophic strategy created Imperial Japan's desperate tactic

FUTURE
ISSUE 128

RBLI

THE GREAT TOMMY SLEEP OUT

SLEEP BENEATH THE STARS TO SUPPORT OUR ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY

Date: Anytime in March 2024

Location: You can take on this challenge wherever you are!

During the month of March we need you to brave a cold and potentially wet night to sleep out under the stars while fundraising for our most vulnerable veterans.

RBLI.CO.UK/SLEEPOUT

RBLI

Registered with FUNDRAISING REGULATOR

Royal British Legion Industries (RBLI) Hall Road, Aylesford, Kent ME20 7NL. Registered Charity No: England & Wales 210063 Scotland SC048795 | VAT No: GB916326234

fundraising@rbli.co.uk
rbli.co.uk
@RoyalBritishLegionIndustries
@RBLICharity

SCAN TO GET OUR WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

CONTRIBUTORS

MARK GALEOTTI

Mark is honorary professor, UCL School of Slavonic & East European Studies, and the author of several books on the history of Russian security. In this issue he discusses the Chechen Wars, their impact on modern Russia and their parallels with the war in Ukraine (p24).

ALEX BOWERS

Alex is a British writer, historian, and an expert on Canadian military history, based in Nova Scotia. Over on page 42 he recounts the Battle of Ortona, also known as the 'Little Stalingrad' for its intense and costly urban combat.

JENNIFER O'LEARY

For years, Father Patrick Ryan led a double life, serving as a Catholic priest, all the while gathering bomb components, finances and intelligence for the IRA. His fascinating and dark story is the subject of a new book by BBC journalist Jennifer O'Leary (p38).

© Getty

***Above:** Kamikaze pilots wreaked havoc on the US Navy in the Pacific*

Welcome

The Battle of Leyte Gulf in 1944 saw a huge shift in fortunes in the Pacific theatre. It heralded the return of American forces to the Philippines after their withdrawal in the face of an overwhelming Japanese invasion in 1941. Now, just under three years later, Imperial Japan turned to an unthinkable method in order to combat the formidable US Navy, sending its pilots to crash deliberately into American ships. As Michael Haskew explores this issue, the Kamikaze was a desperately tragic tactic that drew on militaristic fanaticism, indoctrinated into unquestionably courageous pilots. It signalled the tragic beginning of the end for the war in the Pacific.

Tim Williamson
Editor-in-Chief

SUBSCRIBE & SAVE!

Take advantage of our fantastic subscription offers and get **History of War** for less than half price!

TURN TO PAGE 50

CONTENTS ISSUE 128

THE FIRST KAMIKAZE

26 Uncover the militarist zealotry and desperate strategy that led Imperial Japan to sacrifice its pilots at the Battle of Leyte Gulf

SUBSCRIBE & SAVE

Turn to page 50 for incredible subscription offers

FRONTLINE

CHECHEN WARS

12 **TIMELINE**
The Russian Federation faces its first major threat as the North Caucaus region bids for independence

16 **A VOLATILE PAST**
The breakup of the Soviet Union resurrected old cultural and political divisions within Russia

18 **GRACHEV, GROZNY & THE GUERRILLAS**
The first conflict sees an outnumbered rebel force hold out against an ill-prepared government offensive

20 **STORM IN MOSCOW**
A series of explosions in the Russian capital are used to leverage support for a new president, and a renewed war

22 **DEATH OF GROZNY**
On the second attempt, the Russian military obliterated the capital, crushing the resistance

24 **KADYROV AND THE KREMLIN**
Prof Mark Galeotti discusses how the post-war settlement props up two brutal authoritarians

20

06 **WAR IN FOCUS**
Stunning imagery from throughout history

26 **THE FIRST KAMIKAZE**
Read how militarist zealotry and flawed strategy led to Imperial Japan's tragic tactic

VICTORIA CROSS HEROES

34 **EDWARD 'MICK' MANNOCK**
This working-class Irishman's piloting skills earned him the RAF's first VC

38 **THE IRA'S TERROR PRIEST**
Journalist Jennifer O'Leary discusses her investigation into Father Patrick Ryan

GREAT BATTLES

42 **ORTONA, 1943**
Known as the 'Little Stalingard', this urban battlefield saw intense street-to-street fighting

OPERATOR'S HANDBOOK

52 **CONSOLIDATED PBY CATALINA**
Inside the American-designed sub hunter

58 **THE ROAD TO DEFEAT**
Dr Robert Lyman discusses why the British Army went from 1918 victors to the disaster of 1940

64 **LITTLE WILLIE AND THE PROTOTYPES**
Mike Haskew looks at the difficult design process of producing the world's first tank

34

52

74

71 HOMEFRONT

72 **MUSEUMS AND EVENTS**
A roundup of activities and exhibitions

74 **WWII THIS MONTH**
Key Second World War events in photos,

76 **REVIEWS**
The latest military history books and films

82 **ARTEFACT OF WAR**
This blood-stained glove reveals the gruesome reality of the Battle of Waterloo

WAR in FOCUS

CHRISTMAS IN THE BLITZ

11 December 1940

The winter of 1940 was a terrifying time to be a Londoner as strategic German strikes on individual targets were gradually replaced with large-scale, indiscriminate bombing raids. Rationing had been in place since the start of the year but, as pictured, some Londoners still enjoyed the festive tradition of a live turkey auction. In this joyful chaos, punters could earn a cut-price Christmas dinner and beat the rations. However, the seasonal cheer did not last as the Blitz continued to intensify. Four days after Christmas Day, the city suffered its worst air raid yet, named the 'Second Great Fire of London'.

© Getty

WAR in FOCUS

ENTERTAINING TROOPS IN VIETNAM

24 December 1970

The singer, dancer and actress Lola Falana is pictured performing for US troops during Bob Hope's United Service Organizations tour in 1970. Falana was a huge name, making her American film debut and winning a Golden Globe New Star of the Year award that year. Hope's variety shows, beginning in the Second World War, were known for drawing big stars, and troops arrived up to eight hours early to secure a prime spot. However, he struggled to curate a packed line up for his shows in Vietnam because many anti-war performers refused to join him.

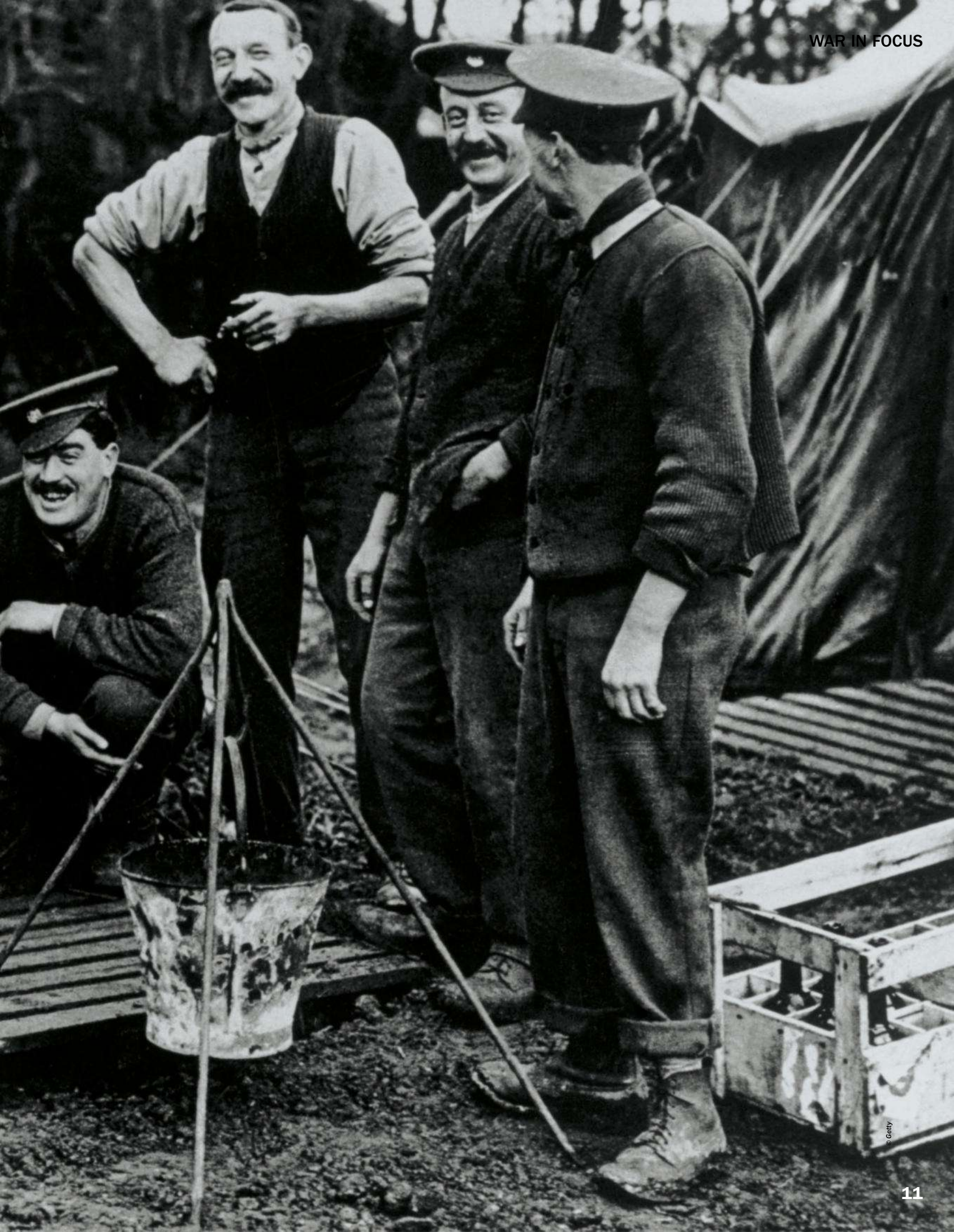
© Getty

WAR in FOCUS

ENJOYING A CHRISTMAS GIFT

December 1915-17

British soldiers enjoy a song played on their gramophone, a Christmas gift from friends at home. At the outbreak of war the gramophone and phonograph played a key role in recruitment, with numerous patriotic songs encouraging young men to sign up. And from 1915, British soldiers began to bring their own portable gramophones to the front to provide entertainment for their comrades. Playing much-loved records from home would've been a welcome sliver of festive joy amid the grim reality of the trenches.



© Getty

Bombings of Grozny fuel depots and oil refineries envelope the capital in thick smoke

TIMELINE OF

CHECHEN WARS

In the aftershock of the Soviet Union's collapse, a breakaway region in the North Caucasus makes a bid for independence, prompting a brutal response from the Kremlin

October 1991

CHECHEN INDEPENDENCE

After his election as president of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, Dzhokhar Dudayev declares unilateral independence for the Chechen-Inguish Republic. Meanwhile, Ingushetia opts to join the Russian Federation. Dudayev fails to consolidate power in the remains of Chechnya after dissolving parliament and struggling to fend off attacks from Moscow-backed militant opposition groups.

President Dzhokhar Dudayev speaking at a press conference in Grozny

November 1994 – March 1995

FIRST BATTLE OF GROZNY 01

War breaks out with the Battle of Grozny, which ends in a pyrrhic victory for Russia. The battle culminates in a fierce bombardment of the Chechen Presidential Palace followed by attacks on the Chechen headquarters in the south of the city. By late January, Dudayev decides to pull most Chechen forces back to a temporary capital.

Grozny residents pass the ruins of the Presidential Palace, hit by rockets and two bunker buster bombs

7-8 April 1995

SAMASHKI MASSACRE 02

After Chechen forces flee from a village 22 miles (35km) from Grozny, security services lead a violent operation to 'mop-up' in Samashki. The Russians execute up to 300 Chechens in cold blood during house-to-house searches and torture much of the male population. Shortly after, Boris Yeltsin publicly compares Chechens to Nazis.

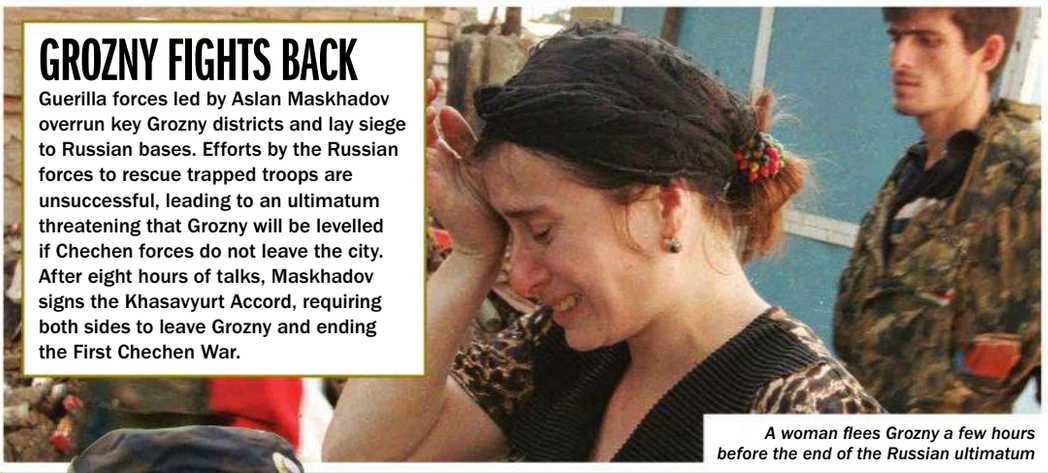
Chechen civilians flee Samashki

BOMBING CAMPAIGN

Russia opens a second conflict with a bombing campaign, including missile attacks and aerial bombing targeting militants in Serzhen-Yurt, Benoy and the Vedeno Gorge before shifting to Grozny. In total, Russian planes conduct 1,700 sorties, crippling Chechen infrastructure and forcing 78,000 to flee to neighbouring Ingushetia. A video of Chechen militants committing atrocities is used by Russia's FSB security apparatus as justification.

GROZNY FIGHTS BACK

Guerilla forces led by Aslan Maskhadov overrun key Grozny districts and lay siege to Russian bases. Efforts by the Russian forces to rescue trapped troops are unsuccessful, leading to an ultimatum threatening that Grozny will be levelled if Chechen forces do not leave the city. After eight hours of talks, Maskhadov signs the Khasavyurt Accord, requiring both sides to leave Grozny and ending the First Chechen War.



A woman flees Grozny a few hours before the end of the Russian ultimatum

INTERWAR UNREST 04

Aslan Maskhadov is elected president in 1997, but struggles to maintain control of a republic in economic turmoil, with countless armed former guerillas. He removes parliamentary power and convenes an Islamic State Council, igniting a power struggle. Meanwhile, a rival Islamic government, Mehk-Shura, emerges, demanding the creation of a Muslim confederation across the North Caucasus.

Presidential hopeful and guerilla leader Shamil Basayev holds a rally in the election campaign

21 April 1996 — August 1996 — August 1996 – August 1999 — August – September 1999

DUDAYEV ASSASSINATED 03

A Russian reconnaissance aircraft intercepts a phone call from President Dudayev's satellite phone. Russia deploys two Sukhoi bombers to bombard his location, killing the Chechen leader. His death is announced on a broadcast by the guerrilla commander Shamil Basayev, and he's replaced by Vice-President Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev.

An SU-25 jet, as used alongside an SU-24 to fire two laser-guided missiles killing Dudayev

SECOND CHECHEN WAR 05

The Islamic International Peacekeeping Brigade invades neighbouring Dagestan with a force growing to 10,000 militants. Meanwhile, over 300 people perish in the Moscow Apartment Bombings. The bombings' perpetrators remain disputed, with claims they were either conducted by Chechen rebels or the Russian security services in a false flag operation to increase Vladimir Putin's popularity and justify war in Chechnya.

A Russian MI-26 explodes after crashing during the deployment of Russian forces in Dagestan

Images © Alamy, Getty

25 December 1999 – 6 February 2000

Bombardment during the Siege of Grozny led the UN to name it the most destroyed city on Earth

SIEGE OF GROZNY

Shortly after commencing the Second Chechen War, Russian forces seize a ridge within artillery range of Grozny and begin a savage bombardment with rockets and thermobaric bombs. They then send in small groups of infantry trained in urban warfare. The 3,000 Chechen fighters use the sewage system in an attempt to outmanoeuvre the Russian troops.

2 February 2000

BREAKOUT FROM GROZNY

Chechen troops begin running out of supplies in late January 2000. Chechen forces make their escape through a minefield under heavy artillery fire, losing 400 fighters. The militia are forced onwards without rest, facing continued shelling and cluster munitions. Eventually, they reach the Vedeno Gorge, inaccessible to Russian forces.

Chechen refugees escaping the bombed village Katyr-Yurt

May 2000

INSURGENCY PHASE BEGINS 06

Soon after taking Grozny, Vladimir Putin establishes direct rule in Chechnya and large-scale fighting ends. However, small separatist units continue to attack Russian security forces, officials and civilians for a further nine years. Security responsibilities are gradually transferred to pro-Kremlin elements in Chechnya to deal with the continuing insurgency.

Despite the official end of war, many Chechens remain in refugee camps for years

Shamil Basayev (right) pictured in 1995, a year before he's killed by an explosion at an arms deal

SHAMIL BASAYEV ASSASSINATED 08

Insurgency leader Shamil Basayev is killed conducting an arms deal when he's caught in an explosion so massive authorities find fragments of his body up to a mile away. His death is disputed; Chechens claim a landmine accidentally exploded, while the FSB says a security operative triggered a remote detonation.

BESLAN HOSTAGE CRISIS 07

School No 1 in Beslan is busier than usual due to Knowledge Day celebrations at the start of the Russian school year when Chechen militants attack, forcing 1,100 hostages into the school gym. After three days, a chaotic battle breaks out as security forces attempt to remove the militants from the school, catching many hostages in the crossfire and killing 333.

Russia's disastrous attempt to lift the seige at Beslan was met with international condemnation. Here, South Korean protestors hold "Putin is a Real Terrorist" placards

The serious injury of Yunus-bek Yevkurov, Head of Ingushetia, by a roadside bomb in Nazran demonstrated the spread of separatism beyond Chechnya

END OF 'COUNTER-TERRORISM' WAR

The 'counter-terrorism' operation in Chechnya officially ends in April 2009, with just 480 insurgents left fighting in the mountains under the command of Doku Umarov. The security threat for Russia transfers into low-level insurgent activities across the North Caucasus and continue until December 2017. The majority of the violence is in Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria.

"SECURITY FORCES ATTEMPT TO REMOVE THE MILITANTS FROM THE SCHOOL, CATCHING MANY HOSTAGES IN THE CROSSFIRE AND KILLING 333"

9 May 2004 — 1-3 September 2004 — 10 July 2006 — 7-12 August 2008 — 16 April 2009

ASSASSINATION OF AKHMAD KADYROV

During the Second Chechen War, Akhmad Kadyrov switched allegiance to support the Kremlin, and became President of the Chechen Republic. Insurgents make a dozen assassination attempts before eventually killing him in a bombing at a Soviet Victory Day Parade. His son Ramzan takes office in his place.

Reuters journalist Adlan Khasanov, one of 31 killed in the Grozny Stadium Bombing

RUSSO-GEORGIAN WAR BEGINS

Relief comes for Chechen civilians when the Russo-Georgian War begins, drawing the Chechen Spetsnaz 'Vostok' and 'Zapad' battalions onto this new front while Chechen separatists fight alongside the Georgians. The shift of military focus out of Chechnya contributes to a substantial stabilisation, which continues until Russian forces return.

War led to a complete breakdown of Russo-Georgian relations, and an enormous decline in Putin's popularity in Georgia

Images © Alamy, Getty

A VOLATILE PAST

With the emergence of the Russian Federation, as Moscow sought to assert its power and re-establish its sphere of influence in the world, one defiant region's desire for independence resulted in a gruesome conflict

On 31 December 1994, after a week-long bombardment, Russia's ground forces prepared to enter Chechnya's capital, Grozny. The indiscriminate onslaught had caused thousands of civilian casualties and had pounded the city into a smoking ruin. General Pavel Grachev, the head of Russia's 25,000-strong ground forces, was expecting a swift victory over the estimated 3,000 Chechen fighters under the command of Aslan Maskhadov, who were still defending the city. Little did he know, as he ordered his first tanks in, that his troops would soon be ensnared in a vicious battle for survival, or that the conflict history remembers as the First Chechen War would continue for more than four-and-half years.

But why had Russia sent troops into Chechnya, starting a war within this tiny region in the first place? The answer to that is rooted in Russia's volatile past. Russia's fraught relationship with Chechnya can be traced back more than 200 years. Its troops had first conquered the territory in 1785 as part of a campaign to secure trading routes to the Middle East. According to a recent study, the resulting Caucasian War (1817-64) saw 90 percent of the 1.5 million Circassian Muslims living in the region either killed or exiled as it was annexed by Russia.

A Chechen militiaman perches on top of a toppled statue of Lenin, October 1991

After a brief period of independence following imperial Russia's collapse, the region was reoccupied by the Soviet Union in 1921. Under Stalin, Chechnya was subjected to a series of Russification programmes that saw around one-third of its population removed to Central Asia to make way for citizens from elsewhere in the USSR. These were so devastating that it would take until the 1980s before ethnic Chechens once again made up the majority in their homeland. By then, with the USSR unravelling, Chechnya's independence movement began to reassert itself.

In September 1991, as the USSR fell apart, Chechen separatists made a bid for power. In a coup d'état, they overthrew the local Soviet government, declared Chechnya a sovereign state and installed Dzhokhar Dudayev as the new republic's president. When his presidency was then ratified by a referendum, Russia's president Boris Yeltsin responded by dispatching an interior ministry force of 650 men to Grozny. It was met at the airport by thousands of Chechen separatists and forced to withdraw without a fight. The humiliation was not one Yeltsin would easily forget.

At the end of March 1992, the Russian Federation emerged from the ashes of the USSR with the signing of the Treaty of Federation. The agreement saw almost all the former Soviet republics pledge their political allegiance to Moscow in return for assured autonomy and trade links. One notable absentee, however, was Chechnya, which had refused to sign. To Yeltsin, this wasn't just a snub. He regarded Chechen independence as a destabilising force with the power to threaten Russian national security. Fearing it might encourage other republics to seek secession, he and the other new leaders in Moscow began to look for ways to reel in the upstart Chechens.

Chechen men from the Old People's Council show their support for Chechen leader Dzhokhar Dudayev, 6 April 1992

Instability in Chechnya soon presented them with the opportunity they were looking for. While most Chechens wanted independence they were deeply divided on how their country should be run. As its economy tanked, violent crime and severe social disorder swept through the new republic. Before long, an undeclared civil war had broken out between the authorities and various rival factions.

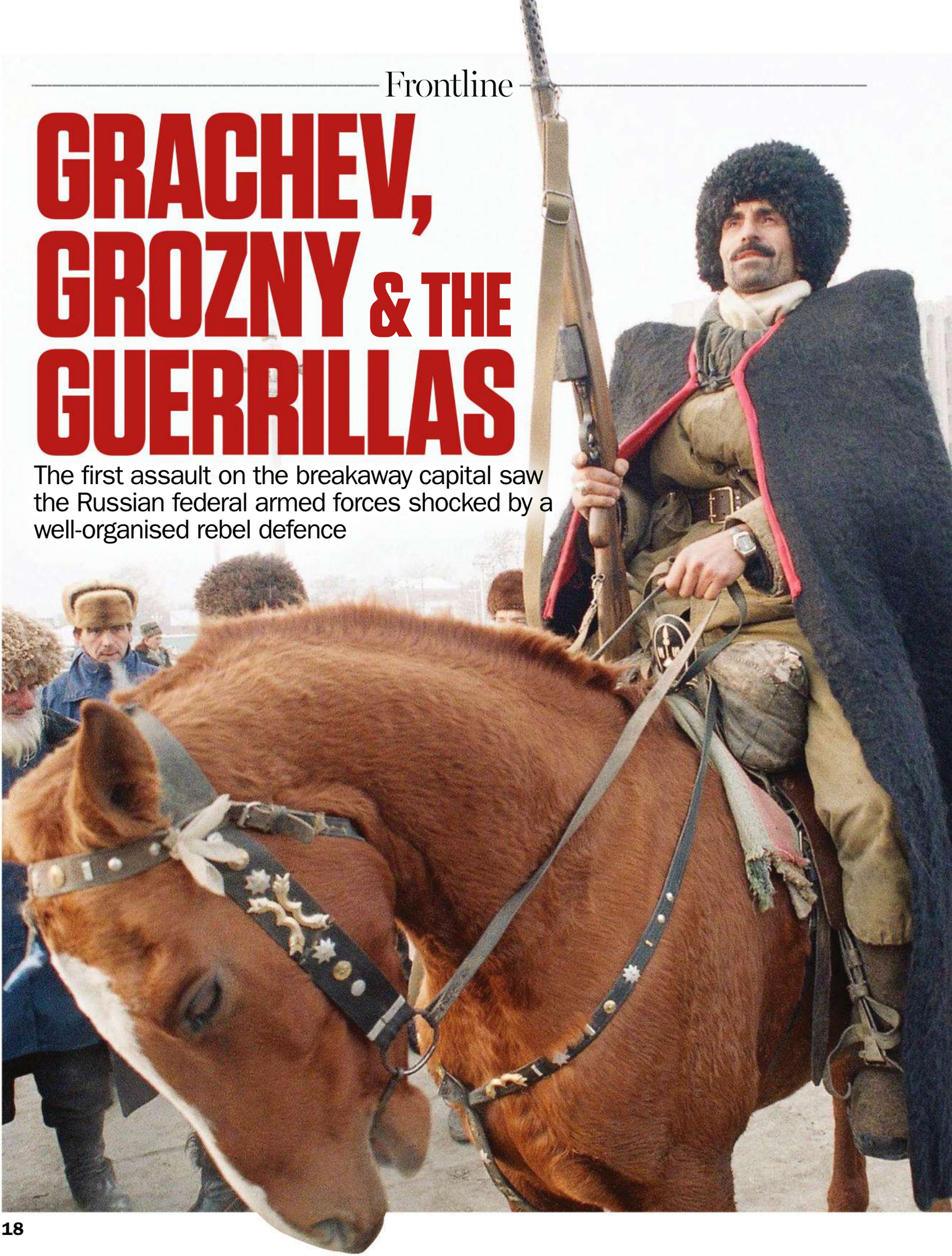
This bitter internal conflict gathered momentum over the next few years, and in October 1994 forces hostile to Dudayev launched a full-scale assault on Grozny. Although Yeltsin had publicly ruled out Russia's involvement in the conflict, in reality the anti-Dudayev forces enjoyed both military and financial backing from Moscow. This attack failed, however, as did a second larger one that also saw 20 Russian soldiers captured, leaving Moscow's proxy coup in tatters and Yeltsin publicly humiliated a second time. He now ordered Dudayev's forces to surrender, and when they refused the stage was set for a showdown between Russia and Chechnya. The first Russian airstrikes would hit the country on 28 November, and by New Year's Eve Grachev was ready to send his tanks into Grozny.

"FEARING IT MIGHT ENCOURAGE OTHER REPUBLICS TO SEEK SECESSION, YELTSIN AND THE OTHER NEW LEADERS IN MOSCOW BEGAN TO LOOK FOR WAYS TO REEL IN THE UPSTART CHECHENS"

Getty Images

GRACHEV, GROZNY & THE GUERRILLAS

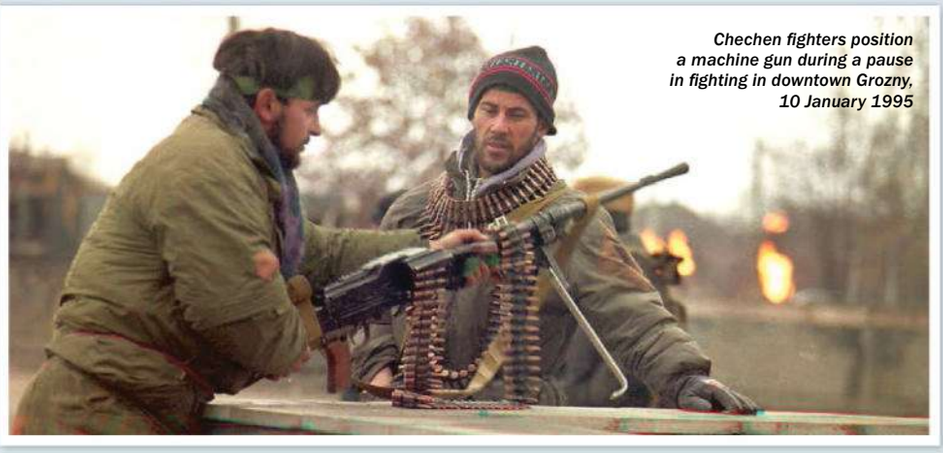
The first assault on the breakaway capital saw the Russian federal armed forces shocked by a well-organised rebel defence



Russian ground forces attacked Grozny from four sides in December 1994. This force, made up of mechanised units supported by paratroopers, poured into the city. General Pavel Grachev was schooled in the Soviet strategic doctrine that urban terrain should be avoided if possible and if not then seized quickly with an overwhelming force. After bombarding the city for the preceding week, he was confident that his numerically superior army, with its tanks and armoured personnel carriers (APCs), would crush Grozny's 3,000 defenders and link up at the presidential palace in the city centre within hours.

On paper, this looked like a decisive plan in the best traditions of the Red Army but Grachev's troops were not Red Army veterans. For the most part, they were young conscripts with no experience of combat. More used to guarding facilities or escorting prisoner convoys, they'd also received no training in how to fight a counter-insurgency operation. Numerically the odds may have been with them but, as they were about to discover, they were up against a committed and experienced enemy unified by a common cause. Many of the Chechen fighters were themselves former Soviet soldiers so were well-versed in the tactics Grachev's commanders would use. They also had intimate knowledge of Grozny's streets and they now harnessed this cumulative wisdom with devastating results.

Before leaving Moscow, Grachev had promised his bosses a "bloodless blitzkrieg". What now unfolded was the polar opposite of that, as this eye-witness account by Ilyas Akhmadov, a former Red Army officer fighting with the Chechen resistance, revealed: "What struck me was that the Russian tanks and APCs were not even advancing in battle order. They were marching as if on the parade ground with only a distance of five to six metres [20ft] between each APC [meaning] they were unable to manoeuvre or turn around when necessary. This was suicidal. What's more, the infantry was also advancing in complete disorder among the APCs. Our tactics were simple but effective: we let the Russian columns enter the city along streets where the APCs and tanks could not manoeuvre. When a column was in a narrow avenue, we simply shot the leading APC and the last one of the column [trapping it]. The Russians were sitting ducks."



Chechen fighters position a machine gun during a pause in fighting in downtown Grozny, 10 January 1995

Operating in small teams sometimes made up of no more than four fighters armed with sniper rifles, machine guns and RPGs, the Chechens attacked the Russians from the rooftops, pinning them down and picking them off. Those Russians who were able to escape these ambushes often fled into booby-trapped buildings or became isolated and were captured.

In response to the unfolding bloodbath, Grachev ordered further airstrikes before resuming the assault. The battle ground on for weeks until, running low on supplies, the Chechen defenders gradually withdrew from the city, taking the fight to the foothills around it instead.

On 19 January, the Russians seized what was left of the presidential palace. The city was finally in their hands but the cost had been appalling. Much of Grozny was in ruins and thousands of people had been killed, including approximately 25,000 civilians, 5,000 of them children. The Russians, meanwhile, had suffered as many as 10,000 killed or wounded and had lost hundreds of armoured vehicles and tanks.

As the war shifted to the countryside, the Chechen soldiers now fought a highly effective guerrilla campaign against the Russians. Ambushes were common, with the Chechens offering no mercy. The Russians responded in kind and the conflict soon descended into a cycle of hostage-taking and mass killings, with war crimes committed by both sides. Among the worst of these was the Samashki Massacre in April 1995, when Russian troops murdered an estimated 250 Chechen civilians. The Budyonnovsk Crisis, which saw Chechen fighters cross into Russia and take more than 1,500 people hostage, resulted in over 120 deaths and a temporary ceasefire.

By 1996, Yeltsin was fighting for his political life. Russia's economy was in turmoil and the Communist Party looked likely to regain power in the forthcoming election. He desperately needed a win and it came on 21 April, when President Dudayev was killed in a missile attack. It went some way to restoring Yeltsin's reputation and helped him win at the polls. Three days before he was due to be sworn in for his second term, however, Chechen fighters launched a surprise attack on Grozny and recaptured the city.

By now, there was no appetite in Russia for the war and Yeltsin decided to cut his losses. On 30 August, the Khasavyurt Accord effectively brought the conflict to an end.

Although Yeltsin did his best to distance himself from the failed campaign in Chechnya, Russia's political hardliners were left in no doubt about who'd been to blame for the debacle. The peace deal brought an end to hostilities, at least for the time being. The humiliation it inflicted, however, also killed off any prospect of Russia evolving into a fully fledged liberal democracy and helped pave the way for what happened next.

***Left:** A Chechen fighter in Grozny, 12 December 1994. Thousands of men had entered the city in the preceding weeks to defend it against the looming Russian assault*

***Bottom:** In the face of daunting odds, Chechen soldiers take up positions in a trench next to a road leading to Grozny, 10 December 1994.*

Images: Alamy, Getty

STORM IN MOSCOW

Reeling from its embarrassing defeat in Grozny, the Kremlin regrouped and plotted a second, devastating and decisive attack on the separatists

The First Chechen War left Chechnya in chaos. The region fell into the hands of warlords and former separatist fighters, many of whom now turned to crime. By 1996, this instability had spread to the neighbouring Russian Republic of Dagestan where a bomb blew up an apartment block killing 68 people, mainly Russian border guards. More attacks occurred the following year, by which time Chechnya had declared itself an Islamic republic and was attracting jihadist groups from across Central Asia.

Things came to a head in 1999 when a 4,000-strong army crossed the border from Chechnya into Dagestan in support of separatists there. Dagestan was also proclaimed an Islamic state and war was declared on Russia. It was to prove a short-lived incident, with local forces combining with the Russian military to drive back the Chechens.

With Russia under new management, however, the stage was now set for the events that would lead to the Second Chechen War.

Vladimir Putin's rise to the top of Russian politics had been meteoric. Backed by a group of corrupt oligarchs, he'd gone from an assistant to the mayor of St Petersburg to Russia's prime minister in three years. The oligarchs, who had grown rich from the privatisation of state assets in the post-Soviet era, fancied themselves as kingmakers. Fearing a return to communism, they'd helped facilitate Yeltsin's victory in the 1996 election. His deepening alcoholism had made him a liability, so they had selected the sober, quiet, apparently pliable Putin to be his successor.

Putin, however, was closely associated with the Yeltsin government and victory for him in the fast-approaching election was not assured. In fact, to stand any chance of winning something significant would need to happen. In September 1999, as if by a miracle, he got exactly what he needed.

Over the course of two weeks, a series of explosions rocked apartment buildings and shopping malls throughout Russia, killing over 300 people. Investigations quickly revealed that Chechen rebels were behind what became known as the Russian apartment bombings. As the shockwaves reverberated and public support for a war against Chechnya grew, Putin seized the political opportunity presented to him. Within weeks he'd declared the Chechen government illegal and had ordered a second invasion.

Not everybody, however, was convinced that things were quite what they seemed. On 25 August, just days before the first blast, Russian journalist Aleksandr Zhilin had written an article in *Moskovskaya Pravda* claiming that a plan codenamed Storm in Moscow was being hatched in the Kremlin. Citing

***Below:** Russian forces enter Dagestan to take on separatists who had declared an Islamic state*

“BACKED BY A GROUP OF CORRUPT OLIGARCHS, PUTIN HAD GONE FROM AN ASSISTANT TO THE MAYOR OF MOSCOW TO RUSSIA’S PRIME MINISTER IN THREE YEARS”

a leaked government document, he wrote that “tremendous shocks await Moscow”, including terrorist attacks.

Conspiracy theories abound in Russian politics but Zhilin’s article drew increasing attention after the attacks. Not least when, on 13 September, the speaker of the Russian parliament (the Duma) Gennadiy Seleznyov announced: “I’ve just received a report… from Rostov-on-Don [that] an apartment in the city of Volgodonsk was blown up last night.” This report turned out to be remarkably prescient as the bomb he was referring to didn’t go off for another three days.

The day after the attack actually took place, another member of the Duma, Vladimir Zhirinovsky, called Seleznyov out, saying: “Remember Gennadiy how you told us on Monday that the apartment block in Volgodonsk had been blown up three days prior to the blast? How should we interpret this?” Seleznyov responded by denying Zhirinovsky the right to speak in parliament for a month and the record of the State Duma’s session for 17 September 1999 was later removed from public access.

***Below:** Vladimir Putin visits Russian troops in Dagestan three weeks after being named prime minister, August 1999*

***Above:** Russian Interior Ministry troops and Dagestani volunteers celebrate after capturing the village of Tando*

To complicate matters, on 22 September a bomb was discovered in the basement of an apartment block in the city of Ryazan. Although it was disarmed before it could do any damage, Putin responded by reasserting that Chechen terrorists were to blame. Calling for a massive air campaign in the North Caucasus region, he famously declared: “We will hunt the terrorists everywhere. Excuse me for saying so but if we catch them in the toilet, we’ll soak them in the toilet if that’s what it takes. It will finally be sorted.” This rhetoric helped establish Putin’s reputation as a straight-talking tough guy while simultaneously drowning out the truth. The day after the bomb was discovered in the Ryazan apartment, police arrested the men who’d planted it. They turned out to be officers working for Russia’s intelligence agency, the FSB. They weren’t charged and on 24 September the FSB’s director Nikolai Patrushev claimed that the bomb had been planted as part of a counter-terrorism exercise.

The main evidence that the attacks were carried out by Chechen separatists is two phone calls. One, made to the Interfax News Agency on 9 September, was from an anonymous man speaking with a Caucasian accent who claimed the bombings were being undertaken in “response to the bombing of civilians in Chechnya and Dagestan.”. Another phone call on 15 September, this time to the ITAR-TASS news agency, claimed responsibility on behalf of the Liberation Army of Dagestan. To this day, no evidence exists that any such organisation has ever existed.

Images: Alamy, Getty

DEATH OF GROZNY

The second Russian offensive saw a brutally uncompromising approach that levelled the Chechen capital to the ground

Regardless of who was behind the bombings in 1999, Putin now had the support of the Russian people to prosecute a second war in Chechnya. As he'd promised them, the conflict began with a massive aerial bombing campaign. Hundreds of sorties were flown throughout September 1999. Grozny airport was rendered inoperable and oil refineries, bridges, telecommunication centres and power stations were all hit as the country's infrastructure was gradually destroyed. Civilian areas were targeted, too, resulting in hundreds of deaths and approximately 100,000 refugees, many of whom fled to Georgia or Dagestan.

Eventually, on 1 October, Putin signalled the start of the ground offensive by declaring Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov and his government to be illegitimate. Around 80,000 Russian troops now crossed the border. They met with little resistance – within four days they'd reached the Terek River and had seized the northern part of the country. Maskhadov's appeal for peace was rejected by Putin, as was a request by the Chechens for NATO to intervene.

Wary of repeating the mistakes of 1994, the Russians proceeded cautiously. On 12 October, they crossed the Terek and, using heavy artillery and air strikes to smash everything ahead of them, approached Grozy in a two-pronged attack. Hundreds of thousands of civilians were swept up in the advance and either fled south or were interned in so-called filtration camps to prevent militias from springing up.

By 16 October, the Russians had captured the Tersky Heights. This strategic ridge put their artillery within range of Grozny and they now bombarded the city, firing an estimated 4,000 shells and rockets into Grozny each day. Five days into this bombardment a Scud missile struck Grozny's crowded marketplace, killing 140 people and wounding hundreds more. Eight days after that, Russian aircraft attacked a refugee convoy on the Baku-Rostov highway, killing 25 people. This slaughter of civilians would become a leitmotif of the war.

By 12 November, Chechnya's second-largest city Gudermes, 25 miles (40km) east of Grozny, was in Russian hands after the local warlords switched sides. Smaller settlements fell, too, including the symbolically significant

Russian troops fire artillery at enemy positions 18 miles (30km) south of the capital, January 2000

Below: Russian soldiers rest amid the shattered ruins of Grozny's Minutka Square, February 2000

village of Bamut, which had resisted repeated Russian attacks during the First Chechen War.

By early December, Russian forces had surrounded Grozny, with their commander General Viktor Kazantsev claiming it to be successfully blockaded. The Siege of Grozny now began in earnest and would continue through the harsh winter.

Artillery and airstrikes hammered Grozny's citizens, many of whom were now cowering in basements with little food and no electricity. As districts of the city were systematically flattened, units of Russian infantry, specially trained in urban warfare, swept the ruined streets, hunting down survivors.

Russia's firepower was overwhelming and although resistance remained fierce, the Chechen commanders decided to once again withdraw and take the war to the mountains.

On 31 January 2000, a force of 4,000 Chechen fighters attempted to break through the Russian lines in southwest Grozny. Caught out in the open by Russian troops, they suffered approximately 1,000 casualties as they made their escape. Two days later, Grozny fell.

Once they'd regrouped, the Chechens resumed the guerrilla tactics that had served them so well in the First Chechen War. Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) became a potent weapon against the

***Above:** Men at a Chechen refugee camp. Hundreds of thousands of people were displaced by the fighting*

Russian forces that now pursued them. The Russian counter-insurgency operation was brutal and repressive. On 5 February, 82 people were killed in the Novye Aldi massacre when Russian troops went on the rampage. On 9 February, a missile attack on an administration building in Shali left an estimated 150 civilians dead. Meanwhile, the Russians' use of thermobaric weapons was so widespread that Human Rights Watch called on Moscow to stop using them.

By the end of February, with the number of Chechen fighters reduced to an estimated 2,000, the Russian commanders declared the 'counter-terrorism operation' in Chechnya to be over. Victory was claimed and a month later Putin was elected Russian president, winning almost 54 percent of the vote. One of his first acts was to re-establish direct federal control over Chechnya, setting up a pro-Russian government.

Although Russia declared the war officially over in 2002, it wasn't until 2009 that Chechnya's exiled leader Akhmed Zakayev called for an end to the hostilities. It was only then, after seven more years of sporadic fighting, that Russia could finally bring its troops home.

The fierce Chechen resistance had been crushed, but at a terrible cost. The Russians had lost between 1,250 and 5,000 men, with thousands more wounded. Many more were left so traumatised by the brutality of the conflict that a new psychological condition known as Chechen Syndrome was identified. For the Chechens, of course, the suffering was even greater. An estimated 10,000 Chechen fighters had been killed, 50,000 civilians slaughtered and hundreds of thousands wounded or displaced. Grozny, meanwhile, was described by the UN in 2003 as the most destroyed city on earth. Today, it is still reeling from the war. Ruled by brutal dictator Ramzan Kadyrov, Chechnya remains the poorest republic in the Russian Federation.

"THE RUSSIANS' USE OF THERMOBARIC WEAPONS WAS SO WIDESPREAD THAT HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH CALLED ON MOSCOW TO STOP USING THEM"

Images: Alamy, Getty

KADYROV & THE KREMLIN

Q&A WITH PROFESSOR MARK GALEOTTI

Since the official end of the Second Chechen War, the region's status within Russia has remained uniquely complex, with a mutual reliance on Moscow propping up two authoritarian regimes

Mark Galeotti is Honorary Professor at University College London's School of Slavonic and East European Studies, as well as the head of the Mayak Intelligence consultancy. He has published multiple books and articles on Russian history, and is a frequent commentator on the nation's political affairs, particularly with regards to the war in Ukraine.

His book *Russia's Wars in Chechnya 1994-2009*, originally published in 2014, has now been updated with 50 new images and additional analysis of the events of the last decade in Ukraine. Here he discusses the current and potential impact of the conflict in Ukraine on Chechnya and its oppressive regime under Ramzan Kadyrov. The new edition of Mark's book is on sale January 2024. For more information visit **ospreypublishing.com**.

What is the perception of Chechnya, and Chechens, among Russian society in general?
Chechens are, to be blunt, feared and resented, more so, I think, than any other ethnic group within the Russian Federation, and that applies as much to the latte-sipping metropolitans in Moscow as grizzled factory workers in the Siberian rust belt. In part, this is because of the (heavily mythologised) brutality of Chechen organised crime, in part the experiences of the Chechen war and the associated mass terrorist attacks (with thousands being seized as hostages in hospitals in 1996 and 1995, a theatre in 2002 and a school in 2004) and in part a rich vein of 19th-century 'colonial literature' in which the wily and indomitable Chechen was a recurring threat to Russian imperial expansion.

Why did the Kremlin choose to militarily crush Chechen independence, when it had allowed other nations to separate without a shot fired?
Ukraine, Georgia and the rest of the other states that acquired independence at the end of 1991 had been notionally separate nations within the wider Soviet Union, whereas Chechnya was a part of the Russian Federation itself. As a result, Moscow feared that if it let it go, it would simply embolden other parts of the Federation, which would quickly unravel.

Chechnya had not only to be kept within the fold, this had to be done with such a heavy hand that any other potential separatists were deterred. After the First Chechen War, in which the rebels essentially fought Moscow to a draw, it was not only vital that they be taught a bloody lesson, but it would be essential to the rise of Vladimir Putin that he demonstrate that he could win where his predecessor Boris Yeltsin had failed.

Is there still an active Chechen resistance movement? Where, and how much support does it have?
Chechnya today is under the vicious personalistic authoritarian rule of Ramzan Kadyrov, a former rebel commander who defected to Moscow's side after the First Chechen War. As a result, there is no real resistance movement still present inside Chechnya beyond the odd, very sporadic terrorist incident. There is certainly a certain amount of resentment against Kadyrov and his corrupt and brutal regime, but no real way to express it.

What resistance survives is now outside the country, from agitators and fund-raisers in Europe (who face the very real risk of assassination by Kadyrov's agents) to the various Chechen units fighting on Kyiv's side in Ukraine: the Dzhokhar Dudayev, Sheikh Mansur, Khamzat Gelayev and Separate Special Purpose Battalions which, titles notwithstanding, are closer to companies in strength.

How precarious is the balance of power in the Chechen leadership today?
Putin depends on Kadyrov to keep Chechnya quiet – especially right now, he cannot afford a Third Chechen War. Kadyrov depends on Putin to keep the money flowing – if nothing else, it allows him to maintain his personal security forces and keep the rest of the Chechen elite sweet.

Both men are dogged by rumours of their ill-health, but if Kadyrov goes, it is not clear whether Chechnya really will be destabilised. Conversely, if Putin goes, his successor will probably want to get rid of the unpredictable and often-inconvenient Kadyrov, but may well also not be willing to risk renewed turbulence in the North Caucasus.

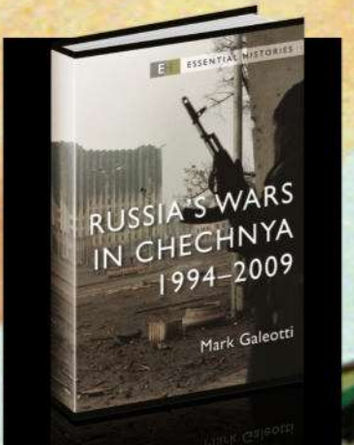
Have the underlying causes of the Chechen Wars been resolved, and under what circumstances might a third conflict break out?
Ever since they were conquered by the Russians, the Chechens have seized any opportunity to try and break free, from the chaos of the Bolshevik Revolution to the collapse of the USSR. For now, they may seem cowed, but I cannot see this lasting forever. Whenever Moscow looks weak or distracted, then there is the risk of a renewed bid for freedom.

How might any eventual outcome in the Ukraine war change the current status quo in Chechnya?
Kadyrov has no chance of taking power in Moscow: he is feared and despised by most of the central elite – including the security apparatus – and his power base is Chechnya. He has performatively sent his 'Kadyrovtsy' to fight in Ukraine, but in practice done everything he can to keep them away from any actual fighting, as they are vital for his personal survival. Whatever happens in Ukraine, so long as Moscow feels it must pay Kadyrov off to keep the peace, and can afford to do so, then the status quo will likely abide.

***Right:** Chechnya's leader Ramzan Kadyrov, son of former Chechen ruler Akhmad Kadyrov, is a staunch Putin ally*

The tomb of the first Chechen President Akhmad Kadyrov, assassinated in 2004

"FOR NOW, THEY MAY SEEM COWED, BUT I CANNOT SEE THIS LASTING FOREVER. WHENEVER MOSCOW LOOKS WEAK OR DISTRACTED, THEN THERE IS THE RISK OF A RENEWED BID FOR FREEDOM"



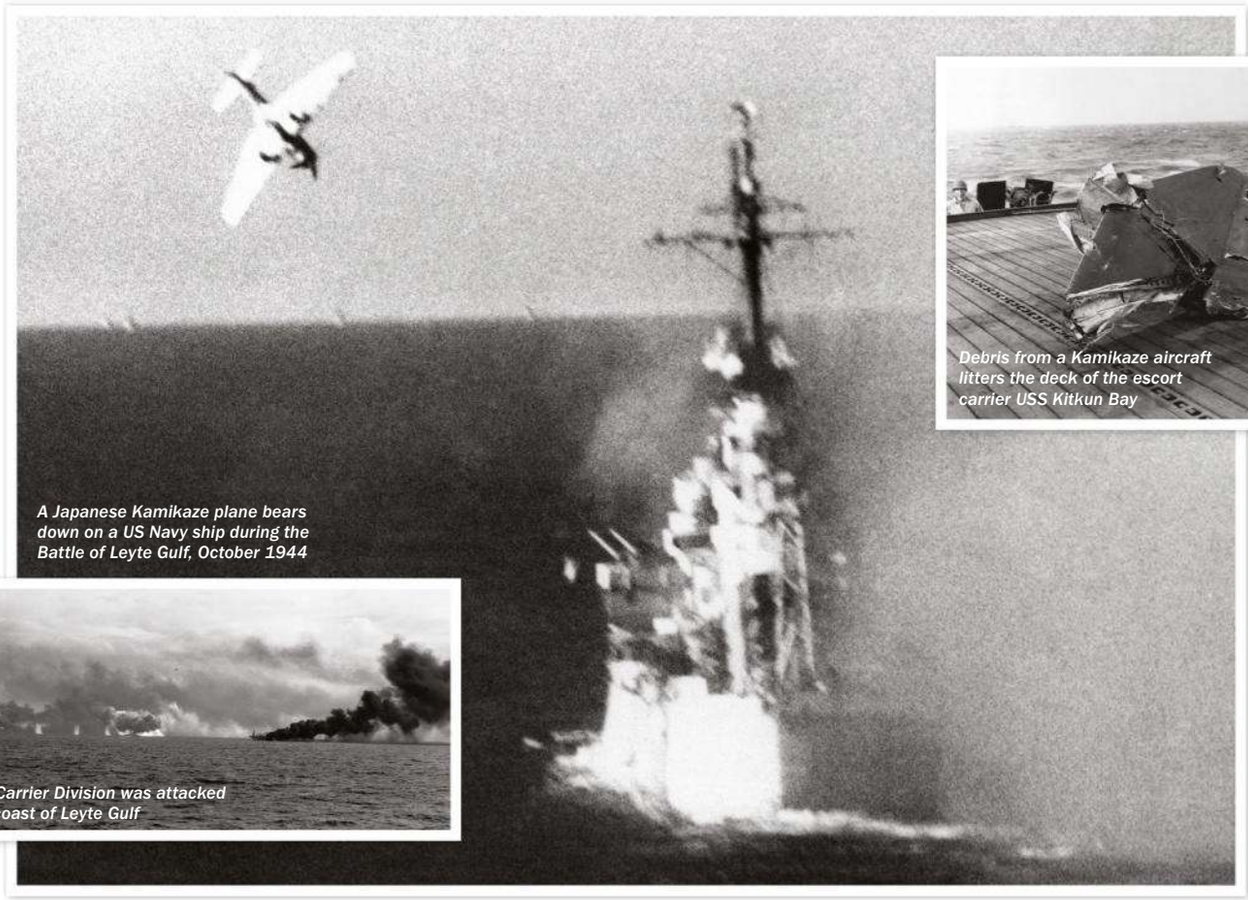
THE NEW EDITION OF *RUSSIA'S WARS IN CHECHNYA 1994–2009* IS AVAILABLE FROM JANUARY 2024 FROM OSPREY PUBLISHING

Image: Getty

THE FIRST KAMIKAZE

Desperate to halt the US juggernaut in the Pacific War, Japan unleashed its suicide squadrons off the Philippines

WORDS MICHAEL E HASKEW



A Japanese Kamikaze plane bears down on a US Navy ship during the Battle of Leyte Gulf, October 1944

Debris from a Kamikaze aircraft litters the deck of the escort carrier USS Kitkun Bay

The US Carrier Division was attacked off the coast of Leyte Gulf

The implications were clear. Without some dramatic redress, disaster loomed for Imperial Japan. In the autumn of 1944, Admiral Takijiro Onishi, recently appointed commander of the once mighty First Air Fleet, was presented with an impossible task. The war in the Pacific had taken a decidedly negative turn for the Japanese Empire, and the US Navy, steadily growing in strength, was poised to strike at the heart of the Home Islands.

With the American landings in the Philippines on the island of Leyte in October, Onishi had concluded that a radical departure from conventional air tactics was the only option to stemming the inexorable American tide. As the epic Battle of Leyte Gulf unfolded, he was afforded the opportunity to employ that radical tactic – suicide air missions against high-value enemy targets, particularly the aircraft carriers of the US Navy, whose complement of warplanes had wrought destruction across the Pacific.

At first, Onishi had opposed the concept of suicide attacks. However, individual pilots had already sacrificed themselves in their zeal to die for Emperor Hirohito, crashing their crippled planes into American vessels, or setting out from the beginning to do so. Under Onishi, the idea became a sanctioned military course of action. The stark reality of the situation had prompted the admiral's change of perspective. During the Battle of the Philippine Sea in June 1944, Japanese carrier air power had been all but wiped out. In fact, the defeat was so thorough that American fighter pilots had labelled the air aspect of the fighting the 'Great Marianas Turkey Shoot'.

Then, in mid-October, US carrier-based aircraft had conducted a series of raids against Japanese installations on the island of Formosa. Again, Japanese losses in planes and pilots were significant, while American raids on bases at Truk and Palau in the Caroline Islands resulted in even greater losses. Through the course of these recent actions, the Imperial Japanese Navy and the Army as well had lost a combined total of more than 800 aircraft. Such devastating losses were irreplaceable. Onishi understood that his remaining planes, numbering roughly 150 and many of them now obsolescent, and his dedicated but ill-trained pilots, were destined to meet similar fates in the unfolding Leyte Gulf battle if conventional tactics remained the order of the day.

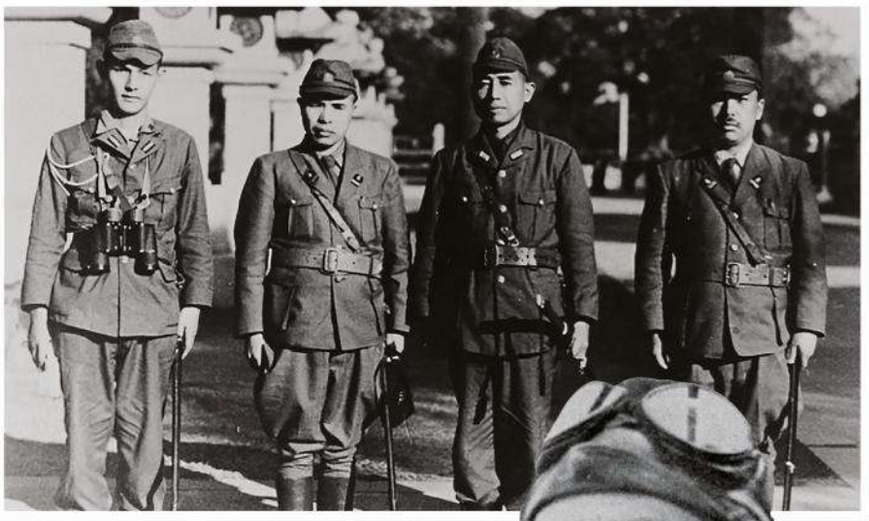
Sacrifice for the rising Sun

Through years of senior command, Onishi had burnished a reputation as an officer who was willing to act, and when he arrived in Manila in early October to take command of the Fifth Base Air Force, he quickly assessed that his mission to protect the Philippines against the approaching enemy could not be accomplished. His forces were inadequate for the job and faced annihilation.

However, Onishi soon became aware of the sacrifice of a fellow naval officer intent on giving his life to strike a blow for Japan in keeping with Bushido, the ancient warrior code that asserted that death for the emperor was the noblest of acts. On 15 October, Admiral Masafumi Arima, the 49-year-old commander of the 26th Air Flotilla based at Manila, had decided he would give his life by deliberately crashing an explosive-laden Mitsubishi G4M 'Betty' bomber into the deck of an American aircraft carrier.

Arima stripped his flight suit of its rank insignia and climbed aboard the Betty. He flew toward a target and soon encountered a veritable curtain of enemy anti-aircraft fire. Shrapnel rocked the bomber, and the plane was blasted from the sky before Arima could complete his suicide mission. However, word of his heroism and willingness to die for the war effort circulated. Onishi reasoned that men of such courage might be emboldened by the example of Arima and willingly follow to a glorious death in battle, perhaps even turning the tide of the Pacific War in the process. Once Onishi had personally come to terms with the idea of suicide missions, their employment came rather swiftly. Yet although Onishi is remembered as the leading proponent of

Images: Alamy, Getty, Wiki / PD / Gov



***Above:** Admiral Takijiro Onishi stands with other Japanese officers at a shrine on the island of Formosa, February 1945*

the suicide missions, a growing number of his fellow officers were already calling for the desperate measure.

When Onishi broached the topic with senior commanders and naval leaders in Tokyo, there was no forceful objection to these 'special missions' to be conducted exclusively by volunteer airmen. He rationalised: "If they are on land, they would be bombed down, and if they are in the air, they would be shot down. That is sad… too sad. To let the young men die beautifully, that is what 'Tokko' is. To give beautiful death, that is called sympathy."

'Tokko' and 'Shinpu' are among several descriptive terms associated with the Japanese concept of self-sacrifice. The most familiar is 'Kamikaze', or 'Divine Wind', a reference to the great storm that destroyed an invading Mongol fleet off the coast of the home islands in 1281. Onishi selected the 201st Air Group as the unit with which to introduce the novel suicide tactic. He visited the unit headquarters on 19 October and informed the gathered pilots, led by Lieutenant Yukio Seki, that a major naval battle was ongoing and the air support for the effort could best be employed by pilots crashing their Mitsubishi A6M Zero fighters armed with 550lb (250kg) bombs into American warships to disable or sink them.

"The situation is so grave that the fate of the empire depends on the outcome of the Sho operation," Onishi told the assembled airmen. "Missions have been assigned. A naval force under Admiral Kurita is to penetrate Leyte Gulf and there annihilate enemy surface units. The First Air Fleet has been designated to support that mission by rendering enemy carriers ineffective for at least one week. In my

***Far left:** Lieutenant Yukio Seki perished while leading the early Kamikaze sorties against the US Navy at Leyte Gulf*

***Left:** Admiral Takijiro Onishi became the 'father' of the Japanese Kamikaze squadrons deployed at the Battle of Leyte Gulf and later*

opinion this can be accomplished only by crash diving on the carrier flight decks."

The initial group of 23 volunteer pilots was designated 'Shinpu' and divided into four sections. These were each given patriotic names: Yamazakura, mountain cherry blossoms; Asahi, morning sun; Yamato, an ancient name for Japan; and Shikishima, another poetic name for the country. The following evening, a meeting was held at Southwest Area Force headquarters, and Onishi received final approval for his Special Attack Squadrons from Vice Admiral Gunichi Mikawa, his immediate superior and commander of the Southwest Area Fleet.

The modern samurai

Lieutenant Yukio Seki was 23 years old. Born in Saijo City, Ehime Prefecture, he was a graduate of the 70th class of the Imperial Naval Academy at Eta Jima, a veteran of earlier wartime deployments and a former instructor at the naval flying school at Kasumigaura. As the events of 20 October unfolded, Seki was given the opportunity to command the first Special Attack Squadron. Some reports state that he paused thoughtfully for about ten seconds before responding: "Please do appoint me to the post."

Other sources indicate that Seki was dutiful but reticent when confronted with the prospect of his own death. Expressing neither patriotic zeal nor Bushido-fuelled fervour, he was interviewed before his final flight by a reporter of the Domei Tsushinsha, the official news agency of the Japanese Empire. Seki bluntly told correspondent Masashi Onoda: "Japan's future is bleak if it is forced to kill one of its best pilots. I am not going on this mission for the emperor or for the empire… I am going because I was ordered to!"

Other youthful Japanese aviators were enthusiastic about the prospect of dying for the emperor. Their educational and cultural background had instilled a sense of duty to the god-man who occupied the Chrysanthemum Throne. Their lives, they were taught, belonged to the emperor, and to die in his service was the greatest honour. One Kamikaze pilot wrote a farewell letter to his family, firm in his conviction. "Please congratulate me!" it read. "I have been given a splendid opportunity to die. This is my last day. The destiny of our homeland hinges on the decisive battle in the seas in the south where I shall fall like a blossom from a radiant cherry tree… May our deaths be as sudden and clean as the shattering of crystal!"

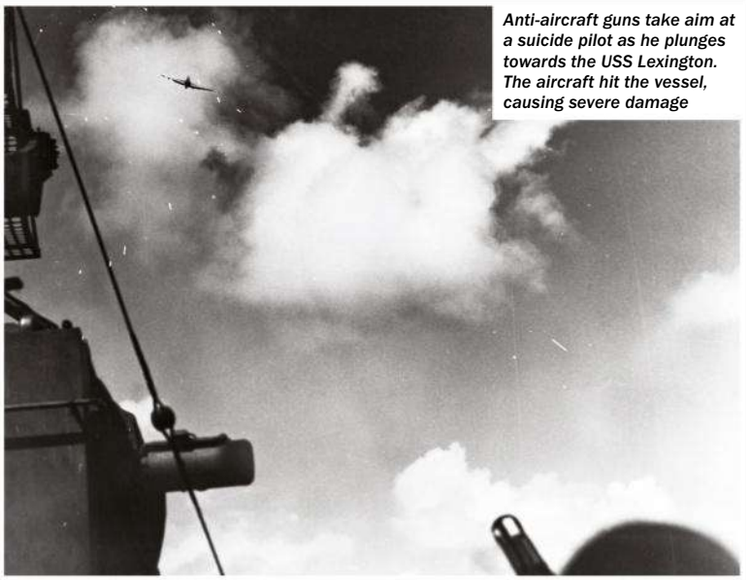
Regardless of personal conviction, the rapid formation of the suicide groups proceeded after the gathering of 23 young fighter pilots volunteered to a man to participate in the attacks. They were the vanguard of approximately 3,800 Kamikaze airmen who gave their lives in suicide attacks during the Pacific War. The Kamikaze are believed

Smoke pours from an American aircraft carrier during the Battle of Leyte Gulf, where Kamikaze attacks were carried out in earnest

"THE DESTINY OF OUR HOMELAND HINGES ON THE DECISIVE BATTLE IN THE SEAS IN THE SOUTH WHERE I SHALL FALL LIKE A BLOSSOM FROM A RADIANT CHERRY TREE… MAY OUR DEATHS BE AS SUDDEN AND CLEAN AS THE SHATTERING OF CRYSTAL!"

Sailors aboard the escort carrier USS Kalinin Bay watch the stricken USS St Lo burn after Kamikaze attacks

Images: Alamy, Getty, Wiki / PD / Gov



Anti-aircraft guns take aim at a suicide pilot as he plunges towards the USS Lexington. The aircraft hit the vessel, causing severe damage

to have inflicted at least 10,000 casualties on Allied naval personnel and to have sunk or damaged nearly 400 ships of every description. Although the Kamikaze were unable to alter the course of the conflict, their employment became a central strategy of the Japanese high command after the Battle of Leyte Gulf.

The first forays

On 21 October 1944, Seki led the first Japanese air attack intent on crashing into American warships. At 9am, the five Zero fighters of the Shikishima group took off from Mabalacat airfield and searched the waters east of the Philippines and north of the island of Leyte for targets. The effort was fruitless, and the planes returned. For three more days, sorties were conducted but bad weather limited the search area and resulted in no action.

Also on the morning of 21 October, the Yamato group was ordered to the island of Cebu, where five of its Zero fighters were destroyed by US Grumman F6F Hellcat fighters that strafed the airfield later in the day. Despite the initial setback, the three remaining Yamato planes took off in the afternoon to hunt for an American carrier group reported in the waters off Leyte. There were no sightings across the expanse of ocean, and the flight leader ordered the other two pilots to return to Cebu. However, he chose to proceed alone in the direction of the approaching enemy and was never heard from again. Concurrently, the Asahi group was ordered to Davao on the island of Mindanao to establish a Kamikaze operation in that area.

Frustration had begun to mount among the highly motivated pilots; however, on 24 October the first suspected suicide contact with American vessels occurred. The fleet tug USS Sonoma had entered Leyte Gulf on 20 October and engaged in assisting supply ships in San Pedro Bay. Four days later,

***Far left:** Vice Admiral Thomas Kinkaid (right), commander of the US 7th Fleet, and Lieutenant General Walter Krueger*

***Left:** Firefighters on the USS Intrepid battle to control blazes caused by a Kamikaze strike, 25 November 1944*

A Japanese warship turns sharply as it is attacked in Manila Bay

the tug had just cast off from the freighter Augustus Thomas when a flight of Betty bombers appeared overhead. Sonoma opened fire with its starboard guns, and one Japanese plane burst into flames. Moments later, the plane crashed into the starboard side of the tug, which immediately began taking on water. A pair of secondary explosions caused severe damage, and efforts to beach the stricken ship failed. Sonoma sank in shallow water a few hours later.

Augustus Thomas was damaged when a Japanese plane crashed between the two American ships and was beached to prevent its sinking. Reports of this action are somewhat contradictory as to whether a single Betty caused damage to both or two bombers were involved. Furthermore, some conjecture exists as to the intent of the Japanese pilots. If they were ordered to execute actual suicide attacks, then Sonoma may be considered the first US Navy ship to succumb to damage inflicted by the Kamikaze.

Elsewhere on the 21st, an isolated suicide attack was carried out against the LCI(L) 1065 at the Leyte beachhead. The American vessel was a small Landing Craft Infantry, a seagoing transport designed to carry up to 200 combat infantrymen and various equipment. Sources disagree as to the type of Japanese aircraft that crashed into LCI(L) 1065, either a Betty or a Mitsubishi Ki-21 Sally. Records do indicate that this plane was also on fire when the fatal crash occurred and the ship sank rapidly with seven sailors dead, nine wounded and five missing.

These sorties were not conducted by Onishi's Special Attack units, and it remains uncertain as to whether they were intended as suicide missions. They were, however, harbingers of the whirlwind that was to come.

Suicide off Samar

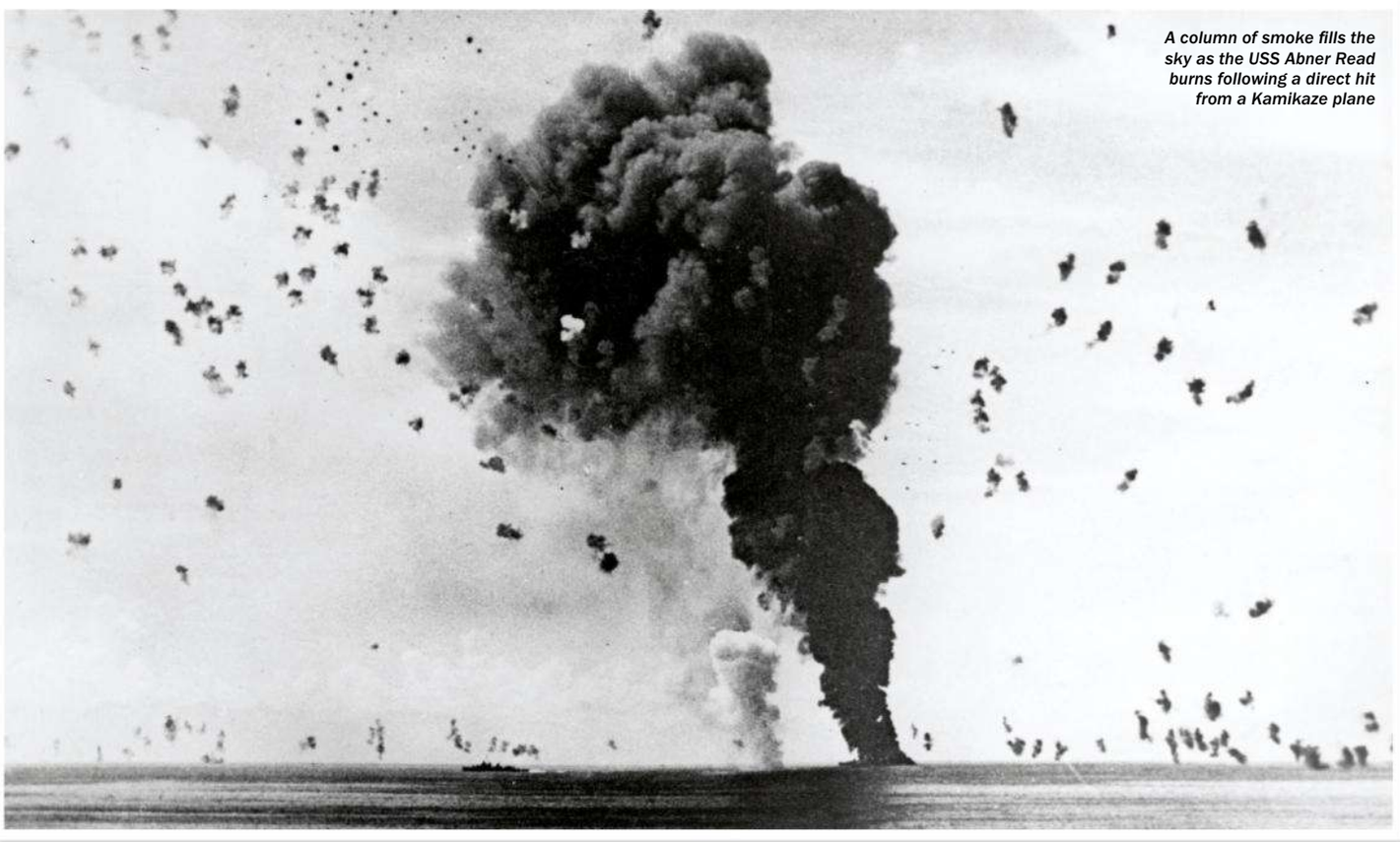
On the morning of 25 October, the tiny ships of US Navy Seventh Fleet escort carrier groups designated as Task Units 77.4.1, 77.4.2 and 77.4.3 had been left to screen the landing beaches and supply vessels off Leyte. Nicknamed Taffy 1, Taffy 2 and Taffy 3, their small 'jeep' carriers had prepared to launch combat air patrols and strike aircraft in support of the troops ashore, while destroyers and destroyer escorts were on watch against Japanese submarines.

"ONE KAMIKAZE STRUCK THE FLIGHT DECK OF THE ESCORT CARRIER USS SANTEE ON ITS PORT SIDE, PENETRATING TO THE HANGAR DECK, WHERE ITS BOMB EXPLODED"

However, just after 6:30am Taffy 3, the northernmost of the groups under the command of Admiral Clifton AF Sprague, was assailed by heavy Japanese warships under the command of Admiral Takeo Kurita, including the super battleship Yamato with 18-inch (457mm) main batteries. The largest calibre weapon aboard any of the American ships of Taffy 3 was only a 5-incher (127mm). Fighting for their very lives, the sailors of Taffy 3 put up a spirited resistance and convinced Kurita that he had encountered a much more powerful force than the tiny ships that barred his entry into the landing zone. On the brink of stunning victory, Kurita ordered his task force to retire. Sprague and Taffy 3 were left to lick their wounds, picking up survivors of the heroic destroyer and destroyer escort crews that had been lost in the one-sided affair.

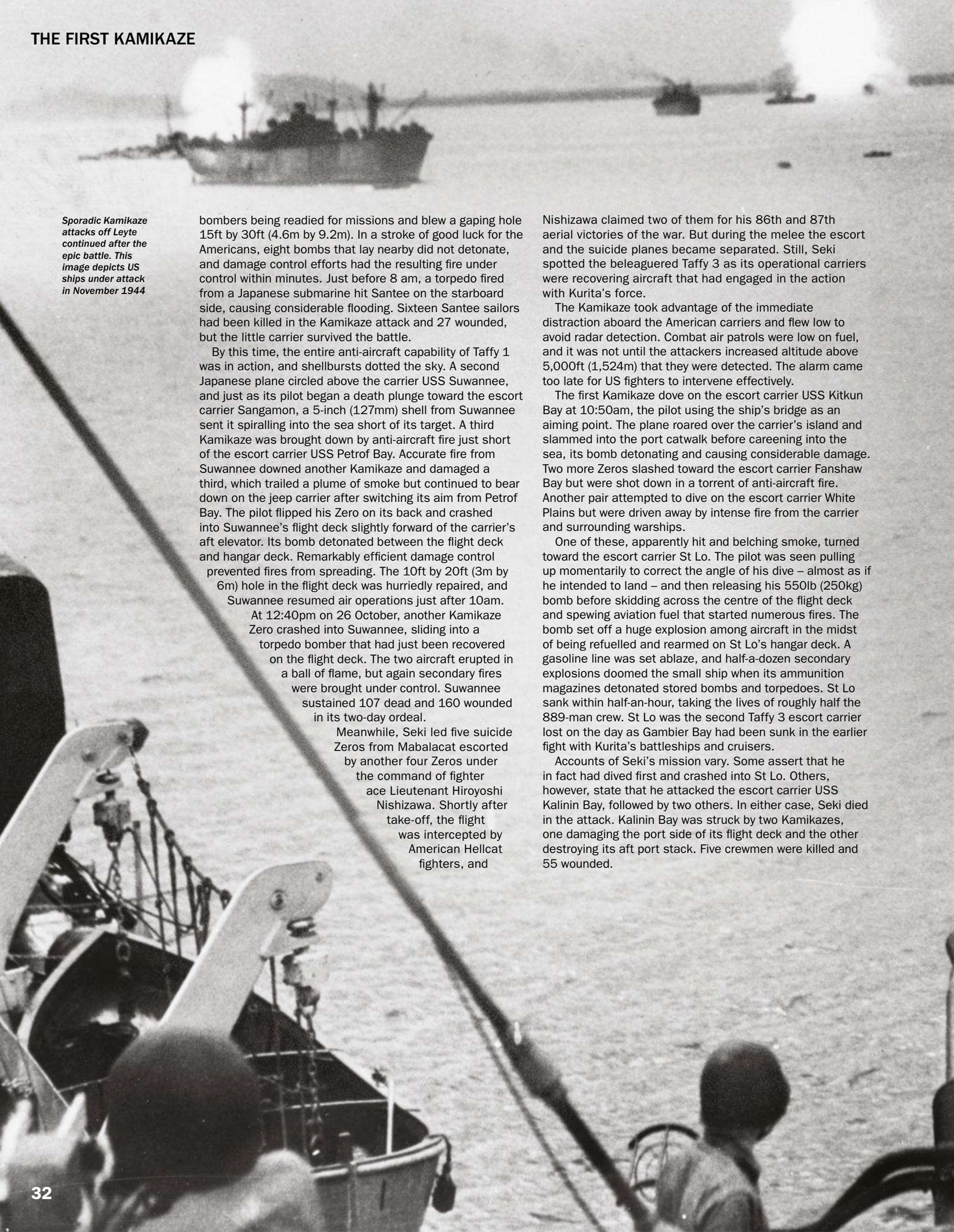
The day's ordeal, though, was far from over – although Taffy 1 and Taffy 2 had been spared the brunt of Kurita's surface onslaught, all three Taffy units were soon subjected to a series of Kamikaze attacks. Operating in waters east of the islands of Leyte and Samar, they were spotted by the first of the suicide squadrons. At approximately 7:30am, Taffy 1 was hit despite early warning from shipboard radar. The six Zeros that had flown from Davao took advantage of cloud cover, and their relatively small number made it difficult to pick them up visually.

One Kamikaze struck the flight deck of the escort carrier USS Santee on its port side, penetrating to the hangar deck, where its bomb exploded among Grumman TBF Avenger



A column of smoke fills the sky as the USS Abner Read burns following a direct hit from a Kamikaze plane

Images: Alamy, Getty, Wiki / PD / Gov



Sporadic Kamikaze attacks off Leyte continued after the epic battle. This image depicts US ships under attack in November 1944

bombers being readied for missions and blew a gaping hole 15ft by 30ft (4.6m by 9.2m). In a stroke of good luck for the Americans, eight bombs that lay nearby did not detonate, and damage control efforts had the resulting fire under control within minutes. Just before 8 am, a torpedo fired from a Japanese submarine hit Santee on the starboard side, causing considerable flooding. Sixteen Santee sailors had been killed in the Kamikaze attack and 27 wounded, but the little carrier survived the battle.

By this time, the entire anti-aircraft capability of Taffy 1 was in action, and shellbursts dotted the sky. A second Japanese plane circled above the carrier USS Suwannee, and just as its pilot began a death plunge toward the escort carrier Sangamon, a 5-inch (127mm) shell from Suwannee sent it spiralling into the sea short of its target. A third Kamikaze was brought down by anti-aircraft fire just short of the escort carrier USS Petrof Bay. Accurate fire from Suwannee downed another Kamikaze and damaged a third, which trailed a plume of smoke but continued to bear down on the jeep carrier after switching its aim from Petrof Bay. The pilot flipped his Zero on its back and crashed into Suwannee's flight deck slightly forward of the carrier's aft elevator. Its bomb detonated between the flight deck and hangar deck. Remarkably efficient damage control prevented fires from spreading. The 10ft by 20ft (3m by 6m) hole in the flight deck was hurriedly repaired, and Suwannee resumed air operations just after 10am.

At 12:40pm on 26 October, another Kamikaze Zero crashed into Suwannee, sliding into a torpedo bomber that had just been recovered on the flight deck. The two aircraft erupted in a ball of flame, but again secondary fires were brought under control. Suwannee sustained 107 dead and 160 wounded in its two-day ordeal.

Meanwhile, Seki led five suicide Zeros from Mabalacat escorted by another four Zeros under the command of fighter ace Lieutenant Hiroyoshi Nishizawa. Shortly after take-off, the flight was intercepted by American Hellcat fighters, and Nishizawa claimed two of them for his 86th and 87th aerial victories of the war. But during the melee the escort and the suicide planes became separated. Still, Seki spotted the beleaguered Taffy 3 as its operational carriers were recovering aircraft that had engaged in the action with Kurita's force.

The Kamikaze took advantage of the immediate distraction aboard the American carriers and flew low to avoid radar detection. Combat air patrols were low on fuel, and it was not until the attackers increased altitude above 5,000ft (1,524m) that they were detected. The alarm came too late for US fighters to intervene effectively.

The first Kamikaze dove on the escort carrier USS Kitkun Bay at 10:50am, the pilot using the ship's bridge as an aiming point. The plane roared over the carrier's island and slammed into the port catwalk before careening into the sea, its bomb detonating and causing considerable damage. Two more Zeros slashed toward the escort carrier Fanshaw Bay but were shot down in a torrent of anti-aircraft fire. Another pair attempted to dive on the escort carrier White Plains but were driven away by intense fire from the carrier and surrounding warships.

One of these, apparently hit and belching smoke, turned toward the escort carrier St Lo. The pilot was seen pulling up momentarily to correct the angle of his dive – almost as if he intended to land – and then releasing his 550lb (250kg) bomb before skidding across the centre of the flight deck and spewing aviation fuel that started numerous fires. The bomb set off a huge explosion among aircraft in the midst of being refuelled and rearmed on St Lo's hangar deck. A gasoline line was set ablaze, and half-a-dozen secondary explosions doomed the small ship when its ammunition magazines detonated stored bombs and torpedoes. St Lo sank within half-an-hour, taking the lives of roughly half the 889-man crew. St Lo was the second Taffy 3 escort carrier lost on the day as Gambier Bay had been sunk in the earlier fight with Kurita's battleships and cruisers.

Accounts of Seki's mission vary. Some assert that he in fact had dived first and crashed into St Lo. Others, however, state that he attacked the escort carrier USS Kalinin Bay, followed by two others. In either case, Seki died in the attack. Kalinin Bay was struck by two Kamikazes, one damaging the port side of its flight deck and the other destroying its aft port stack. Five crewmen were killed and 55 wounded.

A second day of death

Encouraged by the results of the 25 October raids, the Japanese launched Kamikaze attacks with their remaining aircraft taking off from Cebu the following day. When Suwannee took its second suicide hit, an Avenger torpedo bomber sat atop the forward elevator. It was this plane that the Zero pilot struck, resulting in a tremendous fireball. In addition, nine more aircraft were located on the forward section of the flight deck. These did not explode, and the raging fire was extinguished in two hours.

During the same period, Petrof Bay was narrowly missed when two Zeros splashed nearby, one of them only 20 yards off the starboard bow and the other a mere 15ft (4.5m) from the escort carrier's fantail. USS Sangamon also reported a near-miss from a suicide attacker.

An immediate awakening

In the wake of these early Kamikaze attacks, the Americans were stunned by the dedication and ferocity of the Japanese suicide pilots. They strove to address the enemy's new tactics, and Vice Admiral Lloyd Mustin, an experienced gunnery, radar and fire control officer, remarked: "The confusion factor is as intense as he [the Kamikaze pilot] can make it, and the business of picking out which pip is a target, and then which of many targets is the proper one… is a bit complicated… It's an identification process that taxes a well-trained group of people typically found in a ship's CIC [combat information centre]."

As the US Navy became aware of Japanese intent to deploy large numbers of Kamikazes, combat air patrols were stepped up, early warning picket ships were utilised to enhance radar operations, and other tactics were to evolve through innovation and emerging technology. However, the determined suicide pilots continued to stalk the US fleet until the end of the Pacific War, most dramatically in the waters off the island of Okinawa in the spring of 1945.

Nevertheless, even as Kamikaze strikes wrought considerable death and destruction, the rationale for the suicide missions lays bare the simple fact that its originators, Onishi chief among them, were acknowledging that the war was lost. Their forlorn hope that the might of the Allied forces intent on crushing Imperial Japan could yet be defeated in the final months of the war was no more than an illusion.

"THE AMERICANS WERE STUNNED BY THE DEDICATION AND FEROCITY OF THE JAPANESE SUICIDE PILOTS"

Images: Alamy, Getty, Wiki / PD / Gov

LEYTE GULF

The Battle of Leyte Gulf was a major naval engagement fought on 23-26 October 1944 across a wide expanse of the Pacific Ocean off the Philippine Islands. One of the decisive naval battles of the Second World War, Leyte Gulf may also be considered a series of engagements, collectively recognised as the largest naval battle in history.

The Battle of Leyte Gulf occurred just after American troops landed on the Philippine island of Leyte and General Douglas MacArthur made good on his famous promise: "I shall return!" In response to the American landings, the Imperial Japanese Navy enacted a complex plan designated Operation Sho-Go, hoping to destroy the US transports and escort ships that provided logistical support to American troops on the invasion beaches.

The US Navy narrowly avoided catastrophe in the engagement known as the Battle off Samar, fought 25 October, as its fleet aircraft carriers and fast battleships were drawn northward from the Leyte beaches and heavy Japanese warships engaged the light screening force left offshore. Meanwhile, the US Navy inflicted a significant defeat on the Japanese during actions in the Sibuyan Sea, Surigao Strait and off Cape Engaño. After the Battle of Leyte Gulf, US forces on air, land and sea were poised to carry the fight closer to the home islands of Japan.

The escort carrier USS Suwannee sustained serious damage in Kamikaze attacks during the battle

A catastrophic explosion rocks the escort carrier USS St Lo

FURTHER READING

- Mark Stille, *Leyte Gulf: A New History of the World's Largest Sea Battle* (Osprey Publishing, 2023)
- Kenneth I Friedman, *Afternoon of the Rising Sun: The Battle of Leyte Gulf* (Presidio Press, 2001)
- Milan Vego, *The Battle for Leyte, 1944: Allied and Japanese Plans, Preparations, and Execution* (Naval Institute Press, 2006)

Heroes of the Victoria Cross

EDWARD 'MICK' MANNOCK

New to flying and shunned for his working-class roots, this young Irishman nonetheless mastered his craft to become the RAF's first VC recipient

WORDS **LOUIS HARDIMAN**

The afternoon of 7 May 1917 would prove to be a fateful date for the Royal Flying Corps (RFC). Edward 'Mick' Mannock, a rookie pilot, was rocketing along in his Nieuport 23 plane a handful of feet from the ground, racing towards the enemy observation balloons that No 40 Squadron had been harassing for weeks. Simultaneously, No 56 Squadron was attacking the balloons from above, navigating blasts from the German flak cannons below. The squadron's aerial dynamo Albert Ball, Mannock's greatest inspiration with 44 confirmed victories, was engaged in a heated dogfight with enemy fighters, darting among the thick cumulonimbus giants. As the aircraft separated, Ball peeled off into a black, brooding thundercloud. The next time he was seen, the young man was flying upside down with a dead propeller and descending fast, having gotten disoriented in the clouds.

Ball's plane dropped like a stone and crashed into the earth, killing him instantly. Meanwhile, the balloon in Mannock's sights was also dropping rapidly to evade the attack from above. The trap closed as Mannock's target came within range of his Vickers gun. After a few short bursts the balloon fell rapidly, its pilot parachuting out in the nick of time before his craft burst into flames and plummeted to the ground. This was the first of Mannock's 61 aerial victories amassed during the First World War, a tally that would make him the first Victoria Cross recipient of the new Royal Air Force (RAF).

***Above:** Mannock's medals and dog tags were auctioned by Sotheby's in 1992 before their acquisition by the RAF Museum London*

Misfit in the mess and the skies

Great War airmen respected any victory against an observation balloon as the pilot would have to navigate fighter patrols, anti-aircraft artillery, smoke screens and more to get a clean shot. Yet Mannock's reputation as a "boorish know-it-all", as one lieutenant described him, stuck in a mess hall filled with upper-class gentlemen barely out of public school. As a working-class Irish nationalist and socialist, Mannock could not have been more out of place.

A late entry into the war after being interned in Turkey, Mannock was so ill from mistreatment that the Ottomans had judged him unfit for military service and suitable for repatriation. This assessment was misguided, and Mannock was soon well enough to join the RFC by 1916, which became the RAF in April 1918. Here, he learned to fly and was assigned to No 40 Squadron on the Western Front. From the first night he set foot in the mess, Mannock made a terrible impression, accidentally sitting in the chair of a recently killed pilot before lecturing his fellow pilots on aerial combat. The new pilot's behaviour in the air hardly helped, with Mannock's new colleagues witnessing

Mannock pictured wearing his flight gear. WWI pilots were issued long leather jackets and fur hats and gloves to protect them from the elements

“THIS HIGHLY DISTINGUISHED OFFICER, DURING THE WHOLE OF HIS CAREER IN THE ROYAL AIR FORCE, WAS AN OUTSTANDING EXAMPLE OF FEARLESS COURAGE, REMARKABLE SKILL, DEVOTION TO DUTY AND SELF-SACRIFICE, WHICH HAS NEVER BEEN SURPASSED”

Victoria Cross Citation

his fear of combat. Flying over no-man's land during the Arras offensive, he came under fire from German flak for the first time and fell out of formation in panic. Mannock became known as an overly cautious pilot during engagements, and most thought it was best to stay away from him in the skies, as well as on the ground.

From novice to 'ace'

Devoting his time to practising and gaining confidence, Mannock finally came into his element, amassing 15 victories and earning his first of two Military Crosses. He pioneered a bold strategy of flying just yards from the target to ensure all his rounds found their mark. Reflecting in his diary, Mannock wrote: "My man gave me an easy mark. I was only ten yards away from him — on top, so I couldn't miss! A beautifully coloured insect he was — red, blue, green, yellow. I let him have 60 rounds at that range, so there wasn't much left of him."

Mannock's abilities would only grow behind the stick of a Royal Aircraft Factory SE5, which replaced his Nieuport in November 1917. The SE5 was finally Mannock's chance to fly in one of the fastest and most manouevrable fighters of the First World War, armed to the teeth with two .303 calibre guns firing through the propeller via an interrupter gear. His first kill in the SE5 and last for 40 Squadron came on New Year's Day 1918, taking down a Hannover CLIII multi-role aircraft. Shortly after, he wrote a letter to his sister: "Hope all is well in Birmingham. Plenty of work for the airmen and plenty of casualties. Am doing special air work by myself now. A big feather in my cap. Am expecting the DSO [Distinguished Service Order] soon, but may get a white cross instead. Who cares anyway? PS, I have got 16 Huns down to date."

"HE HAD DIED AS HE SO OFTEN EXPRESSED A WISH THAT HE MIGHT – AT THE HEIGHT OF HIS FAME; AT THE MOMENT OF VICTORY; AND WHILE TEACHING A BEGINNER HIS ART"

Lieutenant Donald Inglis

Creating the next generation of 'aces'

Mannock had become a respected pilot, promoted to senior flight commander in 74 Squadron, where he began training the less-experienced pilots at London Colney. His lessons created several more 'aces', guided by his "Fifteen Rules on Air Combat" and the mantra "Always above. Seldom on the same level. Never below." But it was the battlegrounds of France he dreamt of, telling the visiting General David Henderson: "If I can't get back to France with permission, I shall return without permission." Confronted with the threat of a court martial, Mannock replied: "Death is better than dishonour, sir!"

74 Squadron was soon back in combat with Mannock in command of a flight and earning a DSO by May 1918. His tally rapidly rose to 52, but the constant threats faced by Great War airmen were taking a toll on him when he returned to England on 18 June 1918. Family and friends were concerned by his nervousness, and he reportedly suffered from a breakdown. Yet Mannock always refused to

A Nieuport takes down a German Albatross. Low speeds and weak armament meant aerial battles were fought at very close proximity

take time off and never showed weakness in front of his men, so he gained the expected promotion to commander of No 85 Squadron in July 1918. It badly needed someone like Mannock who could lead them over the lines each day and find contact with the enemy. He was immediately well-loved, trusted and respected, and quickly set about forming an elite fighting unit. Mannock kept mentoring and teaching in 85, repeatedly impressing upon his men the importance of not following stricken German planes down to within range of rifle and machine gun fire. He kept producing unmatchable performances in the skies, adding nine victories to his tally in just 21 days and earning a posthumous Victoria Cross.

Mannock’s last flight

On 26 July 1918, Mannock took a new arrival, Lieutenant Donald Inglis, into the skies to obtain his first victory. Inglis was told to sit tight on Mannock’s tail, and a waggle of the wings would be an instruction to come closer. After constant waggling, Inglis’ SE5 was almost touching Mannock’s, zooming along the lines barely 30ft (10 metres) above the ground. Suddenly, Mannock turned back towards Saint-Omer, climbing rapidly before diving on an LVG reconnaissance plane south of Calonne-sur-la-Lys. On his first pass, Mannock took out the gunner, allowing Inglis free rein to pump bullets into the target, bringing it down among the beech trees of Pacult Wood.

***Above:** SE5s take on Fokker D-7s, which were a prime target for fighter ‘aces’ like Mannock*

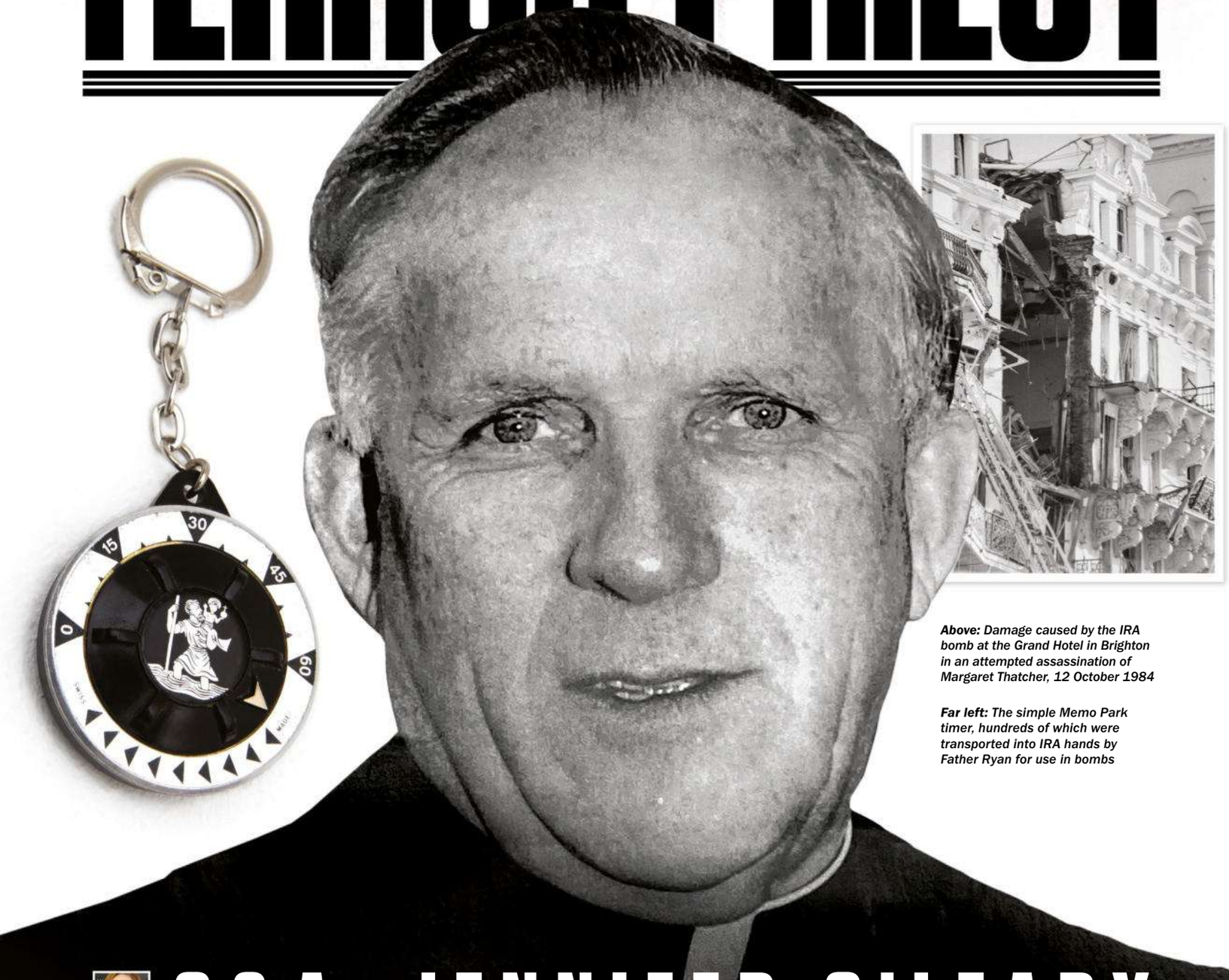
Sadly, Mannock failed to follow his own instructions, circling the downed enemy within range of fire from the ground. Across no-man’s-land, Private Edward Naulls watched in horror as the machine guns below opened up on the two SE5s, turning Mannock’s plane into a ball of fire and putting a hole through Inglis’ fuel tank. Mannock’s burning SE5 arced in a lazy turn before striking the ground, and his body was thrown over 750ft (228 metres) from the wreckage.

News of Mannock’s death was a blow to the men of 85 Squadron, who went pale with the news and staggered to their quarters to weep. If even a legend like Mannock could be killed, so could they. Men of other squadrons arrived in the evening in an attempt to cheer 85 Squadron up with a night of singing and drinking, remembering Mannock with the shared understanding he would not have wanted them to be upset. No 85 Squadron was disbanded in July 1918 but reformed to fight in the Second World War as a night fighter unit. Meanwhile, Mannock’s close friend Ira Jones led a successful lobbying campaign for his posthumous VC, which was presented to his father at Buckingham Palace in July 1919. It’s now on display at the RAF Museum London.

An SE5 fighter similar to that flown by Mannock. It was powered by a 200hp Hispano engine that could reach 118mph (190kp/h) in level flight

Images: Alamy, Getty

THE IRA'S TERROR PRIEST



Above: *Damage caused by the IRA bomb at the Grand Hotel in Brighton in an attempted assassination of Margaret Thatcher, 12 October 1984*

Far left: *The simple Memo Park timer, hundreds of which were transported into IRA hands by Father Ryan for use in bombs*

Q&A: JENNIFER O'LEARY

For years, Father Patrick Ryan evaded the British security services while he acquired weapons, finances and even bomb components for the Irish Republican Army

WORDS **LOUIS HARDIMAN**

For decades, Father Patrick Ryan had denied allegations relating to his involvement in IRA activities and outmanoeuvred multiple extradition attempts. This mask only slipped after a source told BBC journalist Jennifer O'Leary: "If you want a story about the IRA that's never been told by the main player himself, there's a Ryan you need to speak to, but I doubt he'll talk." But Father Ryan did talk during a landmark interview on *Spotlight*, BBC Northern Ireland's flagship current affairs program. Speaking with O'Leary, the priest finally admitted to being involved in multiple IRA attacks, including the attempted assassination of Margaret Thatcher in Brighton in 1984.

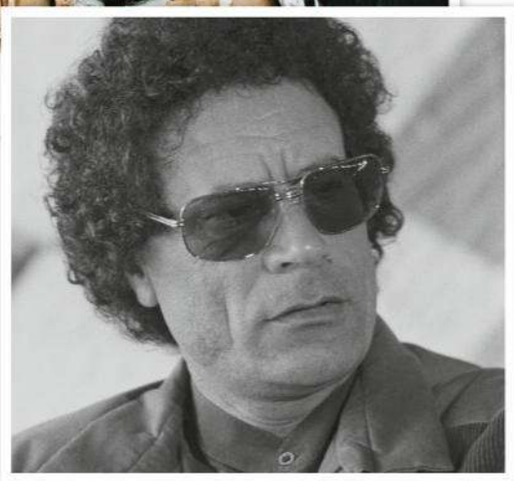
These few minutes on *Spotlight* only scratched the surface of Father Ryan's story, and O'Leary held countless further interviews with the priest which were transformed into *The Padre*. O'Leary's book breaks stunning new ground on Father Ryan's involvement in the IRA's financial, military and logistical dealings in Ireland, Libya and beyond, and how he converted a Swiss parking timer into a highly accurate bomb timer.

O'Leary spoke to **History of War** about Ryan's changing role in the IRA and how, despite not being formally associated with it, he became the organisation's leading representative in Libya. Here, O'Leary also shares her thoughts on navigating problematic and complex sources like Father Ryan's and the importance of creating space for readers to come to their own conclusions.

How did you come to write a book about Father Ryan, given he had led such a clandestine life?
I had spoken to Father Ryan over a number of years and was very mindful there was a lot more that he had to tell than what was already in the public domain. It was after he had agreed to go on camera for a BBC documentary that I went back to him and put to him that I wanted to write a book. And he had no issue with that. From somebody who had spent their life being very careful, not really sharing their story, it took a long time to get the details that I did.

It absolutely was surprising. It took a lot of hard work and patience. Sometimes sources take a while to come to a decision as to whether you can put in the public domain what they share with you. I know that there were a number of attempts down the years to try and get him to tell the story on the record but I put in the work.

How would you describe the relationship between the IRA and the Catholic Church? Was Father Ryan an outlier?
There are a number of other cases where Catholic priests were alleged to have been involved in some capacity with the IRA. In terms of Father Ryan's story, he was very much acting on his own initiative and independent of the structures that he was supposed to be adhering to ethically. In the early 1970s, he began redirecting money that he was collecting for the Pallottine missionary effort, and instead of giving back to his superiors he began redirecting it to Republicans across the border, but really it was a pittance compared to what he would do in a few short years.



"THE MEMO PARK TIMER THAT HE RE-ENGINEERED TO BE USED IN BOMBS TRANSFORMED THE IRA'S CAPACITY TO WREAK CARNAGE"

When his superiors challenged him as to where the missing money had gone, he said that he was quite clear that he did not want to return to any parish in England. He didn't want to be dispatched to the missionary efforts abroad, and he walked away from the order at that stage. Effectively, he had gone to ground. I spoke to one of his former colleagues, who is still a priest, albeit now retired, and as he put it, Father Paddy as he was known to him had disappeared.

In your view, how did Father Ryan rationalise and justify the contradiction between his roles as a priest and an IRA agent?
He doesn't, insofar as he is ruthlessly single-minded in whatever orthodoxy he is dedicated to at a particular time. So for example, as an Irish missionary priest, he was totally dedicated to building clinics and drilling for water; flying a plane between clinics to deliver medicine. But when he turned his attention and his efforts to militant Irish nationalism, that overrode all of the teachings that he had studied for so many years at the seminary and the ethical codes he was supposed to follow.

What he believed in more than anything else was Irish militant nationalism. I think at the core of his story that is what many people find so, so shocking and so surprising. How somebody who was ordained to administer the sacraments of the Catholic Church can be involved in such an explicit way in organising money, and then organising the bomb components that went on to be involved in bringing carnage to so many people.

***Above:** Muammar Gaddafi pictured in 1985, a time when he was close to Father Ryan*

***Above, top:** Memo Park timers converted for use in IRA bombs as conceived by Father Ryan*

Can you talk about the network he established in Libya and his relationship with Gaddafi?
So the IRA in Father Ryan had a valuable asset in Libya because here was somebody who spoke five languages; he was highly educated, he was charismatic, he was cunning enough to be able to suffer what he needed to do and understand who he needed to ingratiate himself with. Crucially, he didn't have a wife and family back home to be yearning to return to. He was very much a sole trader. He set up a system whereby he would travel to Libya to meet with his Libyan intelligence contacts, and at times he would speak to Muammar Gaddafi himself.

That was really about keeping the relationship going because he was physically collecting the money from different Libyan embassies in Europe. He would collect the cash and he had set up a network of sleepers to physically bring the money from Europe back to Ireland, usually via the ferry from Le Havre to Rosslare. So it wasn't like he was collecting the money, putting it in a suitcase and physically bringing it back to Dublin. He very carefully cultivated a very small network of people to do that for him. He also set up a Swiss bank account so there was somewhere safe he could lodge the money while the system was being set up.

Images: Alamy, Getty

Father Ryan stands at Lecky Bridge, where he helped to open a border road

Father Ryan was involved in developing the Memo Park bomb timer, which borrowed from a simple Swiss parking timer to develop the most accurate IRA bomb timer yet. How do you think this contribution to improving the effectiveness of IRA bombing increases his culpability?

The Memo Park timer that he re-engineered to be used in bombs transformed the IRA's capacity to wreak carnage because it made it easier to train IRA bomb-makers and the Memo Park components made it safer for those planting bombs. He bought them in the hundreds and sent them back to Ireland, and Memo Park components became a hallmark of IRA bomb attacks, used in scores of bombings from the mid-1970s onwards. Father Ryan was never the person who was putting the bomb together in a shed in South Armagh or Belfast, [but] he had a hand in every bombing because the components he supplied and he recommended were used.

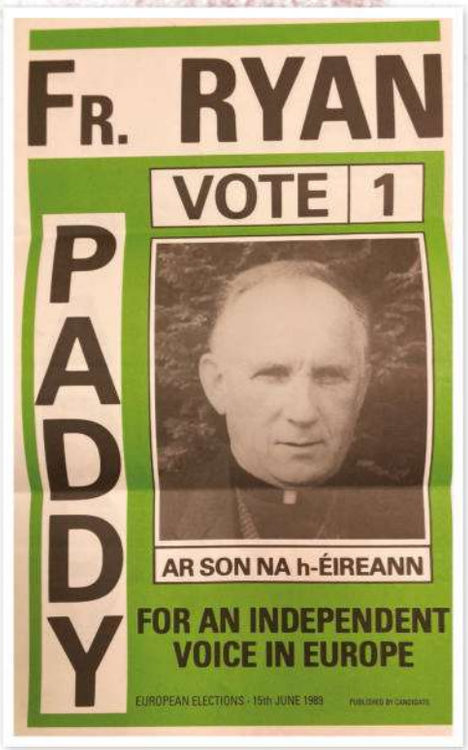
The British authorities failed to apprehend him despite getting close. Why do you think they were unsuccessful?

The Belgian government in 1988 and subsequently the Irish government in 1989 both failed or declined to extradite Father Ryan to Britain, where he would have faced charges at that time. In Belgium, British authorities tipped off their counterparts and in the files I came across they explicitly asked them to keep an eye on him. Instead, the Belgian police arrested Father Ryan. That was turned into a public relations debacle when he decided to go on hunger strike. The Belgian government was faced with the prospect of an Irish priest dying on a hunger strike on Belgian soil. So you can understand the political pressure the Belgian government was under at that time.

Then, after he was repatriated to Ireland, British authorities under Margaret Thatcher's government attempted to apply for his extradition to Britain. That was also turned down by the Irish Attorney General on the grounds that Father Ryan would not receive a fair trial in Britain. That completely incensed Thatcher. A few years earlier, she had signed the Anglo-Irish agreement, and one of the motivating factors was extradition between the two jurisdictions would improve, which never came to pass. Not only that, but Father Ryan had a hand in the Brighton Bombing through the Memo Park component, so she was somebody who had first-hand experience of an IRA bomb, and she had lost many people close to her. It was politically and personally an affront to the British prime minister at that time.

Irish nationalism eventually shifted further towards a more peaceful strategy. How did Ryan's role and perception of the movement change as it became less militant?

He never got involved to the same extent after he had been repatriated to Ireland. He was very much on the outside of the IRA and the Republican movement as a whole. Bear in mind that, because he had never formally joined the IRA, he was independent of their rules and he effectively decided to walk away from the movement.



Left: *One of the posters used by Father Ryan during his 1989 European Parliament election campaign*

Below: *Father Ryan outside what remains of his family home in Turraheen, County Tipperary*

"THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT WAS FACED WITH THE PROSPECT OF AN IRISH PRIEST DYING ON A HUNGER STRIKE ON BELGIAN SOIL"

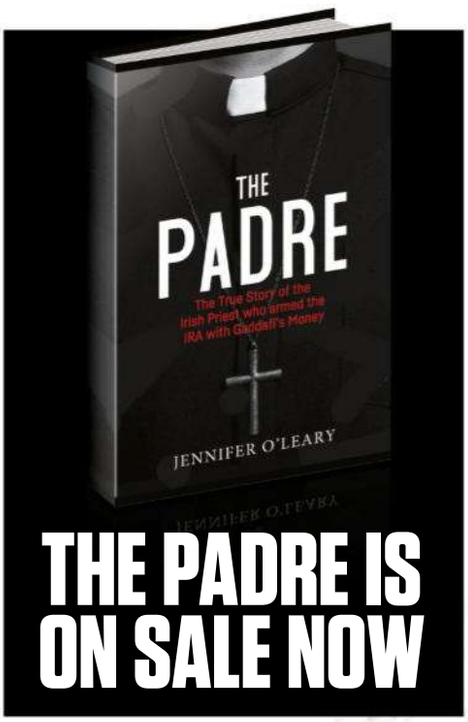
It was his belief that the leadership of the IRA was compromised. To become involved in a military sense in Ireland from 1989 onwards, he describes it as being lambs to the slaughter. So he walked away from militant Irish nationalism and he is more pragmatic in his political leanings and the direction towards peace.

As a journalist, how did you navigate the problematic nature of Father Ryan's deeply complex character?

I treated him the same as any other source that I am listening to. Some of the things that he says, I'm aware in real time that it's very hurtful to victims and difficult to listen to. My approach has always been if you listen in judgement, you're only ever going to be able to tell a story in judgement. It's up to readers to decide for themselves what they make of a particular character; what they make of a person's motivation and the choices that they have made in their life.

Father Ryan is somebody who is outwardly gentle and very mannerly. I'd observe him having chit-chat with people wherever we would stop to have our chats. But every now and then, the steeliness at the core of his character would emerge. I remember saying to him at one stage that people will find it very difficult to understand how you have no remorse in terms of your actions. He straightened himself up in the chair and there was a flash of a much younger man in his eyes, and he started to talk about history, British imperialism and the British Empire. I looked him straight in the eye and he just said: "Where is their sorrow?"

You're dealing with somebody who has never been swayed from what he believes and he obviously didn't see anything else in terms of militant Irish nationalism for many, many decades. He still believes in what he did and I think the fact that he has no remorse is what makes it very difficult for victims' families. That's something that I'm very mindful of.


THE PADRE
The True Story of the Irish Priest who armed the IRA with Gaddafi's Money
JENNIFER O'LEARY
THE PADRE IS ON SALE NOW

Images: Alamy, Getty, Jennifer O'Leary

ORTONA, ITALY, 20-27 DECEMBER 1943

ORTONA

In December 1943, as the British Eighth Army advanced through Italy, Canadian forces were thrust against the coastal town of Ortona in a battle dubbed Little Stalingrad

WORDS ALEX BOWERS

Ortona is often viewed as part of the wider Moro River Campaign. Here, the 48th Highlanders of Canada prepare to attack near San Leonardo on 10 December 1943

Much Canadian blood had been split on the long road to Ortona. The cruel path had begun on the shores of southern Italy back in September 1943, before snaking across winter-ravaged countryside by November, all the while pushed back by ferocious German resistance efforts. Hitler had one chief goal: to make the Allies pay for every inch of ground.

Attached to the British Eighth Army as it clawed its way northwards, 1st Canadian Infantry Division – commanded by Major-General Chris Vokes – had arrived at the south bank of the Moro River by early December. There, over several days, attempts to gain a foothold on the far side had proven costly as the 90th Panzergrenadier Division held firm, in spite of their own losses. Only on the 9th were the Canadians able to secure most of their objectives, although their ordeal against a determined enemy and challenging terrain had not yet ended.

The next obstacle became known – somewhat ominously – as The Gully, a 197ft-deep (60m) and 262ft-wide (80m) natural trench spanning three miles (5km), around which the dug-in Germans lay in wait. Major-General Vokes thrust his men forward in a series of frontal assaults, each failing to dislodge the grenadiers. Nicknamed 'The Butcher' for these actions, the Canadian commander subsequently sent his French-speaking Royal 22e Régiment into the fray, at last slicing a wedge into the German defences – and, in the process, facilitating the heroic rise of Québécois Victoria Cross recipient Captain Paul Triquet.

Praised for his leadership in the face of repeated counter-attacks, Triquet's remarkable exploits undoubtedly boosted morale. What they could not do was detract from the considerable casualties sustained within 1st Canadian Infantry Division's ranks. "[Vokes] has been sharply criticised by Canadian historians for how he handled the Moro River Campaign and The Gully," Major Jayson Geroux, a Canadian Army officer, urban operations instructor and leading expert on Ortona, tells **History of War**. "But looking back now, his decision to predominantly use 1st and 3rd Brigades, all the while leaving 2nd Brigade out of the worst of these engagements, had a huge influence on the battle that still lay ahead."

OPPOSING FORCES

1ST CANADIAN INFANTRY DIVISION

LEADER
Major-General Chris Vokes

VS

1ST FALLSCHIRMJÄGER DIVISION

LEADER
Generalleutnant Richard Heidrich

"PRAISED FOR HIS LEADERSHIP IN THE FACE OF REPEATED ENEMY COUNTER-ATTACKS, TRIQUET'S REMARKABLE EXPLOITS UNDOUBTEDLY BOOSTED MORALE"

01 FIRST ATTACK ON THE TOWN

On the morning of 20 December, approaching the outskirts of Ortona, the Loyal Edmonton Regiment and tank support from the Three Rivers Regiment first encounter the town's defenders. The subsequent skirmish quickly descends into chaos, yet the Canadians nevertheless consolidate their positions at the southern fringe of Ortona by nightfall.

02 A FOOTHOLD GAINED

Advancing via the coastal route, the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada take their objective of Santa Maria di Constantinopoli church on 21 December. Seven soldiers from 'C' Company are killed in the process, and the Germans have to be rooted out from the structure. Meanwhile, the Loyal Edmonton Regiment also secure a foothold in Ortona.

03 STONE'S THROW INTO ORTONA

On 22 December, Major Jim Stone sends elements of the Loyal Eddies and tanks down Corso Vittorio Emmanuele only to encounter a large rubble pile blocking the road. Having stumbled into a trap, Corporal George Campion – armed with smoke grenades – leads efforts to remove hidden mines, earning the Military Medal.

04 THE CANADIANS BEGIN MOUSE-HOLING

Captain Wilmot George (Bill) Longhurst of the Loyal Eddies decides to begin the practice of mouse-holing on 23 December. The 'A' Company commander's tactic is soon replicated by the Seaforths, now situated on the left side of the town. Doing so enables the Canadians to move between houses without facing the onslaught of open ground.

08 THE LAST FIGHT

The final day of battle – 27 December – is driven by anger. A Loyal Eddies platoon is buried in a house full of demolitions, prompting the Canadians to do the same to the Germans twice. On Via Monte Maiella, the Seaforths instigate one such act by destroying a factory with the enemy inside. The paratroopers quietly pull out of Ortona overnight.

07 GERMAN TUNNELS DISCOVERED

Following the slow progress of Christmas Day, a renewed three-pronged assault is spearheaded by the Loyal Eddies on 26 December. At Piazza San Tomasso, the Canadians discover tunnels used by the paratroopers to reinforce and infiltrate behind their lines. They are promptly destroyed to snuff out the underground threat.

06 A NOT-SO-MERRY CHRISTMAS

The Loyal Eddies' 'D' Company, alongside support units, try to break through into Piazza Plebiscita on 25 December. Mouse-holing only gets them so far until enemy snipers and grenades start taking their toll. Unable to crack the German defences, the Canadians temporarily pull back from the square. Christmas Day is just another day of urban operations.

05 THE FIGHT FOR DEAD HORSE SQUARE

With a dead horse in the centre of the square, the Seaforths' fight for Piazza San Francesco commences on 24 December. Among the objectives in the immediate area is a school. Unfortunately, shortly after a section takes the building, delayed charges destroy the structure. Private Gordon Currie-Smith is the only survivor unearthed three days later.

"THE SUBSEQUENT SKIRMISH QUICKLY DESCENDS INTO CHAOS, YET THE CANADIANS NEVERTHELESS CONSOLIDATE THEIR POSITIONS AT THE SOUTHERN FRINGE OF ORTONA"

Map illustration: Rocío Espín Piñar

'A tough nut to crack'

That battle was Ortona, an ancient Italian town pressed up against the Adriatic Sea. General Bernard Montgomery, overall commander of Eighth Army, had set his sights on the picturesque community, believing it to be a stepping stone en route to the coastal town of Pescara beyond. Once Ortona and then Pescara were in Allied hands, it was theorised that a left hook on a pass through the Appenine Mountains could threaten Rome on the west coast. Additionally, the ever-ambitious Montgomery hoped to secure Ortona's small port for Allied supplies despite the likelihood – and ultimate reality – that the Germans would destroy it. Nevertheless, Ortona had strategic value insofar as Highway 16, a main thoroughfare for the advancing force, ran through the town. "The saying goes that amateurs talk tactics and strategy, and professionals talk logistics," says Geroux. "You clear Ortona, and you have Highway 16 open for the bullets and beans to be fed up [to Eighth Army]."

Unbeknown to Allied authorities, the enemy planned on holding the town at all costs. Geroux explains: "Canadians are thinking they're going to face the Germans for 24 to 48 hours because that's the precedent set at this stage, and that's what British intelligence has told them to expect. But we all know now that regular German Wehrmacht units had been in Ortona since September 1943, allowing them months to prepare. Most importantly, the Germans had decided that Ortona would be the eastern anchor point of the Gustav Line; it's not going to be farther northwest at the Arielli River like British Eighth Army thinks…

"It gets worse because Wehrmacht troops are replaced by the 1st Fallschirmjäger Division on 19 December 1943, one day before the battle starts… These motivated German paratroopers don't have tanks, and they're going to need to hold the Gustav Line. What is more perfect for a

This piece, painted by Charles Comfort and entitled Via Dolorosa, Ortona, offers an insight into the devastation inflicted upon the town and its people.

Image: Canadian War Museum 19710261-2308 / Beaverbrook Collection of War Art

unit that doesn't have tanks than to put them in an urban area on a plateau?"

With a ravine to the west and the sea to the east of Ortona, terrain was again working against the Canadians, who would have no choice but to attack from the south. The Germans, aware of their geographical advantage, had planned accordingly with tactics as old as the Medieval town itself. "You've got enemy pioneers and engineers… destroying buildings to create rubble in the streets, funnelling [the Canadians] into designated killing zones at the five piazze, or squares," says Geroux. "They're clearing fields of fire, putting in booby traps and improvised explosive devices, and bolstering other defensive preparations that will make Ortona an extremely tough nut to crack… The Germans are essentially practising urban operations doctrine before it was doctrine… and the Canadians have no clue about any of this."

Setting the trap

They were destined to find out. Having avoided the worst fighting of the Moro River and The Gully, 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade under Brigadier Bertram 'Hoffy' Hoffmeister was tasked with leading the assault. The Loyal Edmonton Regiment (nicknamed the 'Loyal Eddies') would enter Ortona along Highway 16, the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada (the 'Seaforths') would approach along the eastern coastal route, and Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI or the 'Patricias') would be in reserve. Meanwhile, support units such as engineers, artillery and Sherman tanks from the 12th Canadian Armoured ('Three Rivers') Regiment were to be made available, partially offsetting the absence of aerial bombing in a futile bid to claim the port intact. The stage, or trap, had been set.

"WE'RE ALL GOING TO DIE ANYWAY, SO WE MIGHT AS WELL GIVE IT A GO"

On a cold and cloudy 20 December, the Loyal Eddies' 'B' and 'D' Companies, advancing with Three Rivers Regiment tanks, encountered their first taste of what the 1st Fallschirmjäger Division had in store. Under fire and slowed by a muddy quagmire, 'C' Squadron troop commander Lieutenant TE Melvin decided to brave driving down the road. Within moments, his crew struck a concealed explosive device, sending the Sherman 20ft (6m) into the air and killing everyone inside. The troop's three remaining tanks avoided the smoking crater only to discover they had been masterfully diverted into a minefield. The devastation to the armour largely halted the advance, mirroring the Seaforths on the right flank after they likewise experienced tougher-than-expected resistance.

Drawing the short straw

Straddling the southern outskirts of Ortona looking inwards, the Canadians' true test would commence the following day, 21 December. Their ordeal would be shared with the town's residents – the Ortonesi – when, at approximately 7am that morning, German explosives were detonated in the Cattedrale San Tomasso as part of the paratroopers' defensive plan. "The cathedral was the most revered in Ortona," says Geroux. "It purportedly housed the tomb of the Christian apostle Saint Thomas, and in fact it was destroyed on the Feast Day of Saint Thomas, an annual event marked by the Ortonesi for centuries… The Germans knew all of this, I'm pretty sure." Around the same time, 'B' Company of the Loyal Eddies started making progress when it cut through the countryside to reach a cluster of buildings on the town's edge. 'D' Company under Major James 'Big Jim' Stone, however, was less fortunate when scores of his troops were cut down by "murderous fire" as they crossed an open field. After two aborted attempts on the objective, the 100-strong unit had been whittled down to no more than 30 fit and able men.

Stone divided his depleted company into three groups, then had their newly assigned leaders draw lots for the third thrust forward. Picking the short straw, Lieutenant John Dougan decided on a different approach via a small ditch that came up beside a German-controlled building. The risk of being caught by a well-placed machine gun seemed huge, but Dougan had a less-than-encouraging argument for trying: "We're all going to die anyway, so we might as well give it a go." Thankfully, the gamble paid off when the ditch turned out to be unguarded and the house unoccupied. The nearby entrenched Germans, oblivious to the bold manoeuvre, were promptly dispatched from behind. By the end of the day, the Loyal Eddies had penetrated into Ortona, reaching the southern limits of Piazza Vittoria.

The right-flanking Seaforth Highlanders, still approaching from the eastern coastal route, also achieved greater success than the day before. Enduring small but sharp enemy firefights, snipers, mortar and artillery fire, the Canadians secured their primary objective of Santa Maria di Constantinopoli church. Hoffmeister, observing the battle a short distance away, eventually instructed a company of the Seaforths to bolster the Loyal

Six-pounder artillery pieces played a critical part in the battle. They, like the tanks, took on an anti-personnel role by firing into enemy-held buildings

One of the battle's most iconic photos, Lance-Corporal EA Harris of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment is pictured on 21 December. He was killed on the 27th

Eddies, leaving the rest of the companies and supporting armour to clear the area surrounding the original church objective.

Over the coming days, Hoffmeister took a more hands-on approach by visiting the battalions in place. “Hoffy had had some challenges prior to the war, but when it came to the business of soldiering, he just really knew his stuff,” explains Geroux. “He knew how to lead by example. He knew that in order to get the most out of his troops, he had to take the same risks as them. He was actually almost killed three times during the Battle of Ortona. Why? Because he was up there seeing the situation for himself, giving encouragement to his battalion commanders and company commanders… He was the right leader at the right time… I have nothing but good things to say about him.”

A fresh gamble

With the growing darkness, both sides broke off contact and, for a few tense hours, often interrupted by artillery, tried to rest – sometimes mere metres apart. The full-throated violence was renewed on the morning of 22 December when the Loyal Eddies managed to clear Piazza Vittoria with an eye on the next square, Piazza Municipali.

Between the two piazze was the road known as Corso Vittorio Emmanuele, on either side of which were German-occupied houses. Fresh off his subaltern’s gamble the day before, ‘D’ Company’s Stone again decided to try his luck. His infantry, accompanied by tanks blaring their sirens, would make a surprise charge up the road toward the square near the town centre, bypassing several enemy-held buildings. The move did not entirely unfold as planned. “You have to remember that the Germans are trying

A painting by Charles Comfort entitled Canadian Field Guns Near Ortona

Image: Canadian War Museum 19710261-2153 / Beaverbrook Collection of War Art

***Top, left:** The Italian locals – the Ortonesi – paid the highest price. Some 1,300 civilians lost their lives to crossfire or when buildings collapsed on top of entire families*

***Top, right:** Canadian war artist Charles Comfort bore witness to the Battle of Ortona. Painting on-scene, his works became some of the most recognisable depictions of the engagement*

to draw the Canadians into Piazza Municipali; that's part of their main defence area…" Geroux explains. "And so Big Jim Stone's force comes up against a huge rubble pile blocking the way, where one of the tankers thinks he sees a hidden landmine. Stone is furious and uses colourful words because he's lost the momentum. But now, the Germans open fire, so the Loyal Eddies burst into the buildings to clear them… The rubble pile is later de-mined, but getting over it has to become the next day's problem."

Despite the hurdle, the Eddies had carved a toehold into the Old Town by nightfall. However, the tenacity of Ortona's defenders had raised questions. "The light bulb goes on with both [Brigadier] Hoffy and [1st Canadian Division commander] Vokes," says Geroux. "It dawns on them that the Gustav Line is not back at the Arielli River. This is the Gustav Line… And so, Hoffy decides to commit more resources to the battle, including more tanks, and shifts the Seaforths from the right to the left flank. The highlanders crisscross the Loyal Eddies' lines overnight and, the following day [23 December], they will be focusing their attention on reaching the westerly Piazza San Francesco. Vokes then realises that in order to defeat the Germans, the Canadians are going to have to get up to the north side of Ortona. So, [Vokes] sends 1st and 3rd Brigades up the west side of the ravine so they can get to the north end of the town and isolate."

Seaforth Private Ralph Forrester lays flowers on his brother's grave after he was killed in Ortona. Bloody December cost the Canadians 2,339 total casualties

Mouse-holing mayhem

The plan was a sound one. Unfortunately, the flanking manoeuvre would do little to prevent Ortona becoming a vicious urban hellscape. On 23 December, having penetrated through to Piazza Municipali, the Loyal Eddies implemented a new tactic. "Old Town's buildings are shoulder-to-shoulder," explains Geroux, "and so ['A' Company commander] Captain Bill Longhurst calls up infantry pioneers, and he calls up his engineers, and he instructs them to head upstairs where they blow a hole into the next building. You then throw grenades into the hole and clear that building from the top downwards, meaning the Germans no longer have the initiative… It's much easier to fight that way because grenades are easier thrown down – gravity is your friend. This is called mouse-holing, although it should be said that it's not a Canadian invention. Longhurst is just practising common sense urban warfare doctrine."

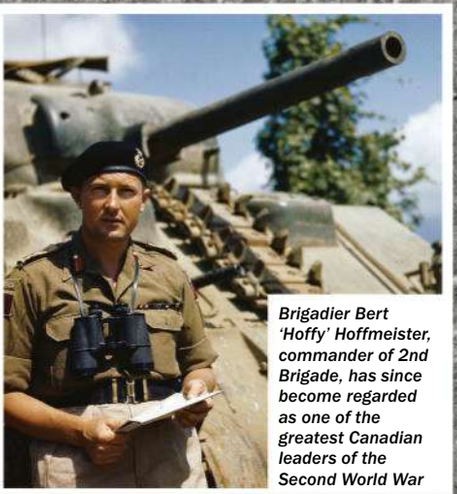
It wasn't long before the Seaforth Highlanders, at that point fighting on the left flank of the Loyal Eddies, heard about mouse-holing and began implementing it themselves. Nor would such brute force be an exclusively infantry affair. The Three Rivers Regiment tanks, alongside the artillery's six-pounders, joined in the cacophony by blasting the stubborn, yet tenacious, German paratroopers out of their defensive strongpoints.

Nevertheless, come Christmas Eve progress slowed significantly, almost to a stalemate, as the Canadians struggled to seize the main piazze. "There are several reasons for this", notes Geroux. "First, German reinforcements have arrived on the scene. Second, Hitler has weighed in that Ortona must not fall. Third, the Canadians have reached the enemy's principle defensive point in the town."

Troops of 'B' Company, the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada, filing along the coastal path toward Ortona. The town is visible in the distance

Image: Library and Archives Canada/Department of National Defence fonds/PA-152719

Major-General Chris Vokes led the entirety of 1st Canadian Infantry Division. However, Brigadier Hoffmeister largely orchestrated efforts within Ortona



Brigadier Bert 'Hoffy' Hoffmeister, commander of 2nd Brigade, has since become regarded as one of the greatest Canadian leaders of the Second World War

Images: Library and Archives Canada/Department of National Defence

The Loyal Eddies, engineers and tanks advance along Corso Vittorio Emmanuele. This street was where Major Jim Stone's force stumbled into a trap

Image: Library and Archives Canada/Department of National Defence fonds/PA-114030

'Nobody wants to die on Christmas Day'

There would be no let-up on 25 December amid the ruins of Ortona. "Of course… nobody wants to die on Christmas Day," says Geroux. "But you don't see a truce like 1914. There's no soccer match between Canadians and Germans… The Seaforths are still fighting in Piazza San Francesco – dubbed Dead Horse Square after a literal dead horse in the centre – and the Loyal Eddies are still fighting out from Piazza Municipali." Yet there would be some semblance of respite for the Seaforths who, through rotation of the companies, received a festive meal in the bombed-out church of Santa Maria di Constantinopoli. Trimmings included pork with apple sauce, mixed vegetables, mashed potatoes, gravy, Christmas pudding and minced pie, all washed down with a single bottle of beer and enjoyed with cigarettes. The Loyal Eddies were less fortunate, with a few men afforded the chance to wolf down cold pork chops near the front. Then it was back to the bloodshed.

But there was an end in sight – even if the bruised and battered Canadians did not know it at that time. "Outside Ortona, 1st and 3rd Brigades are slowly, incrementally, gaining ground," says Geroux. "The Germans are now concerned that they're going to lose two battalions inside the town once 1st and 3rd Brigades swing round to the north and cut them off at the Adriatic. So, on Christmas Day, the Germans have decided they need to withdraw – but they can't let Hitler, or the Canadians, know their plan. The paratroopers put out over the radio that they will reinforce, counter-attack and up the violence levels, knowing that Canadian signal intelligence will intercept it and think they're in for a long fight."

The storm before the calm

Part of the deception ploy would actually be genuine: over the next two days, 26-27 December, the battle for the town's northern piazze – and the Battle of Ortona overall – descended into a crescendo of chaos. Among those who bore witness to the destruction was Canadian war artist Charles Comfort. Renowned for his later depictions of the abhorrent conditions, he said of the urban fighting: "The Seaforths and the Edmontons were at the throats of the Paratroopers… groping through suffocating dust and smoke, stumbling over unturned furniture and debris, struggling breathlessly in nightmare darkness, felling, clubbing, blasting, shooting it out… The Jerry (German) sappers are systematically dynamiting buildings into the street in a desperate delaying action. The barriers of rubble are quickly sown with mines and covered by raking fire. Dust and lead and fragmentation fill the flaming night."

The likes of Piazza Municipali, Piazza Plebiscita and Piazza San Tomasso were each eventually claimed by the Canadians, but it was now emotion – anger – driving the men forward. Demolishing buildings with enemy troops inside became a commonplace tactic on both sides. Terrified civilians, huddled in basements, were likewise crushed to death when the buildings collapsed on top of them. Artillery pummelled the town indiscriminately, contributing to the apocalyptic inferno. And all the while, casualties mounted alarmingly. "At one stage, Vokes comes to Hoffy and asks if he wants to withdraw," explains Geroux. "Knowing that that would destroy morale, Hoffy replies, 'Absolutely not. We're seeing this out to the very end.'"

Holding their own

That end arrived on the morning of 28 December when news spread that the paratroopers had slipped away in the night. Ortona was in Canadian hands – or at least the shell of a town now nicknamed Little Stalingrad. Bloody December, as it became known when combined with the Moro River and Gully campaigns, had cost 1st Canadian Infantry Division 2,339 total casualties, 502 of whom had been killed. German figures are scarce, but some 100 unburied paratroopers were recovered from Ortona alone. However, it had been the Ortonesi who had paid the highest price, with 1,300 killed in the crossfire or in their cellars. Their loss served as a reminder that innocent people were, and are, the greatest victims of war.

Asked about the battle's legacy, Geroux remarked: "Ortona is a small fight. It's a really small urban engagement… Does it have a huge impact on the Italian campaign? I'm not so sure. Was it an important battle for the Canadians? Yes, and it produced some important lessons learned… Like the Germans, I think the Canadians were practising urban warfare doctrine before the doctrine was written and codified. And I think from the standpoint of urban warfare, they did extremely well… Urban warfare is one of the most challenging environments to fight in… and we proved we could hold our own."

FURTHER READING

- Mark Zuehlke, *Ortona*, (Greystone Books, 2004)
- James Holland, *The Savage Storm*, (Bantam, 2023)
- Tim Cook, *The Necessary War*, (Penguin Canada, 2015)

Images: Alamy, Getty (unless stated otherwise)

SPECIAL OFFER

SUBSCRIBE TODAY &

SAVE

50%

6 ISSUES FOR £18.68

Visit www.magazinesdirect.com/WAR50
or call 0330 333 1113 & quote C77T

BRITAIN'S BEST MILITARY HISTORY MAGAZINE
HISTORY of WAR
CHECHEN WARS
Horrors of Putin's first bloodbath
BATTLE OF ORTONA
Inside the bloody street fighting of Canada's 'Little Stalingrad'
RAF'S FIRST VC
True story of Ireland's unlikely pilot ace
PBY CATALINA
In the cockpit of the Allies' iconic U-Boat hunters
THE FIRST KAMIKAZE
Read how zealous militarism and catastrophic strategy created Imperial Japan's desperate tactic
IRA'S WAR PRIEST
How Father Patrick Ryan armed and funded battle against Britain

REASONS TO SUBSCRIBE...

- ✪ Never miss an issue
- ✪ Delivered direct to your door
- ✪ **Brilliant value** – save on the cover price

PRINT EDITION

6 ISSUES FOR £18.68

DIGITAL EDITION

6 ISSUES FOR £14.95

Terms and conditions: Offer closes 30 March 2023. Offer open to new subscribers only. Savings are based on cover price and subscription rate. We will notify you in advance of any price changes. Please allow up to six weeks for delivery of your first subscription issue (up to eight weeks overseas). Payment is non-refundable after the 14 day cancellation period unless exceptional circumstances apply. For full terms and conditions, visit www.magazinesdirect.com/terms. For enquiries please call: +44 (0) 330 333 1113. Lines are open Monday-Friday, 8.30-7pm and Saturday 10am-3pm UK Time or email: help@magazinesdirect.com. Calls to 0330 numbers will be charged no more than a national landline call and may be included in your phone provider's call bundle.

CONSOLIDATED PBY CATALINA

The Allies' maritime patrol workhorse was key to hunting down Germany's U-boats in the Atlantic and beyond

WORDS **STUART HADAWAY**

BROAD HATCHES
As well as a crew door further back, the Catalina had wide hatches on both sides of the forward fuselage. This made rescuing people in dinghies or small boats easier.

LONG DISTANCE TANKS
Extensive fuel tanks in the upper wing gave the Catalina a standard range of around 2,500 miles (4,000km), and much longer distances could be coaxed under certain circumstances.

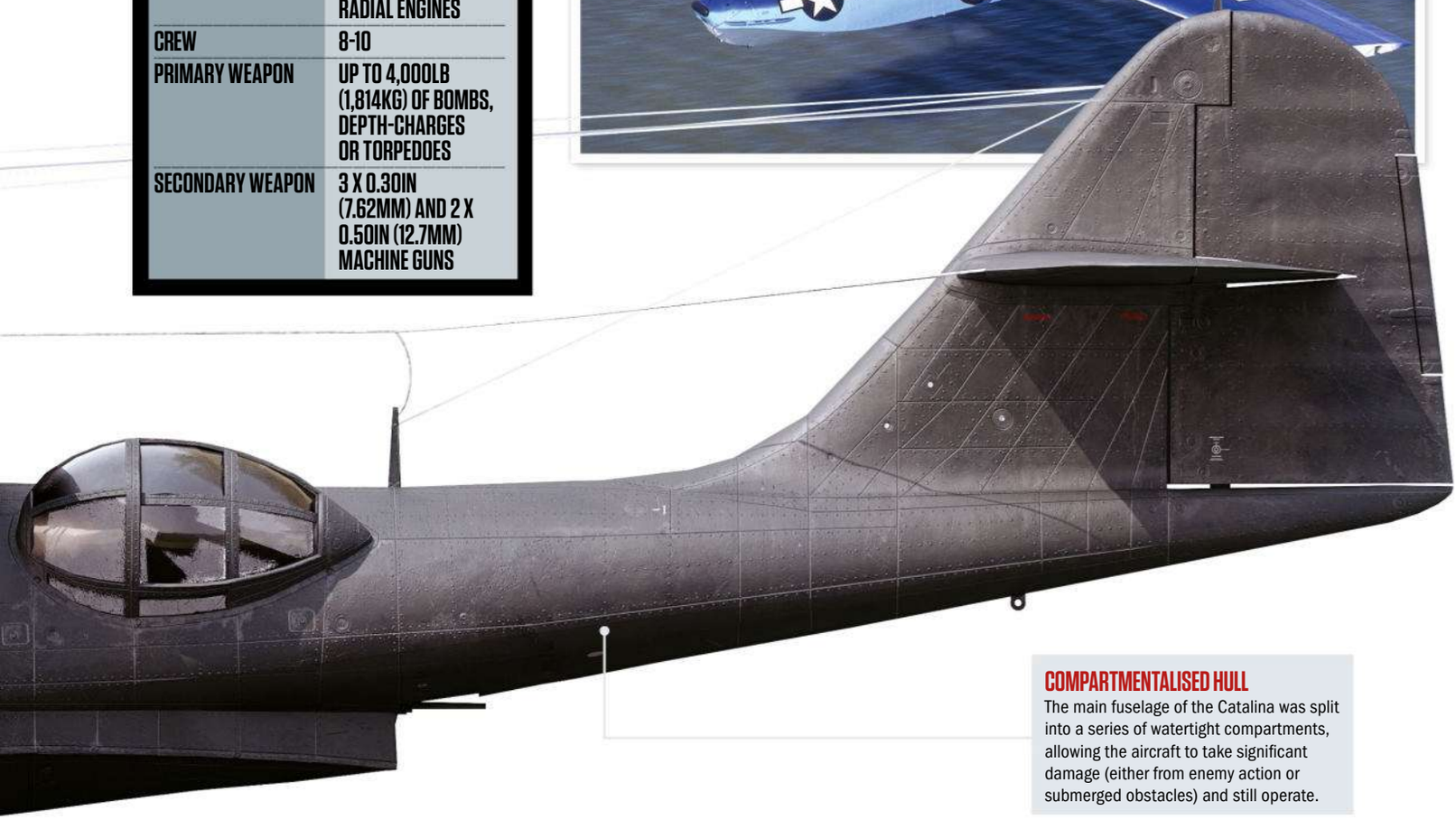
RETRACTABLE FLOATS
The wing-supporting floats were retracted in flight to form the tips of the wings, although in practice this had little effect on the handling capabilities of the aircraft.

Despite being designed in the early 1930s, with its first flight in 1935, the Catalina was the most-produced amphibian of the Second World War. It entered service with the US Navy in 1936 in limited numbers, with the early types being pure flying boats without wheels. The introduction of the PBY-5 in 1939, with retractable wheels, led to the largest US Navy aircraft order since the end of the First World War. The integral undercarriage made the type much more versatile. It could operate on remote shores or undeveloped islands without extensive support equipment. For a nation preparing for a potential war in the Pacific, this was a valuable advantage, and Consolidated had to double the size of its production line to cope with demand.

In March 1941 PBYs entered service with the Royal Air Force, which gave them the name 'Catalina' (or 'Canso' for those built in Canada). Within months they proved their worth, as a Catalina located the German battleship Bismarck and directed the Royal Navy to intercept and sink her. Shortly afterwards, a PBY patrol in the Pacific located the Japanese fleet and triggered the opening moves of the Battle of Midway, a critical moment in the war.

CONSOLIDATED PBY-5 CATALINA

COMMISSIONED	1935
ORIGIN	USA
LENGTH	63FT 11IN (19.47M)
WINGSPAN	104FT (32M)
ENGINE	2 X PRATT & WHITNEY R1830 TWIN WASP 1,200HP (890KW) RADIAL ENGINES
CREW	8-10
PRIMARY WEAPON	UP TO 4,000LB (1,814KG) OF BOMBS, DEPTH-CHARGES OR TORPEDOES
SECONDARY WEAPON	3 X 0.30IN (7.62MM) AND 2 X 0.50IN (12.7MM) MACHINE GUNS



COMPARTMENTALISED HULL

The main fuselage of the Catalina was split into a series of watertight compartments, allowing the aircraft to take significant damage (either from enemy action or submerged obstacles) and still operate.

Below: *Beached US Navy Catalinas in 1937*

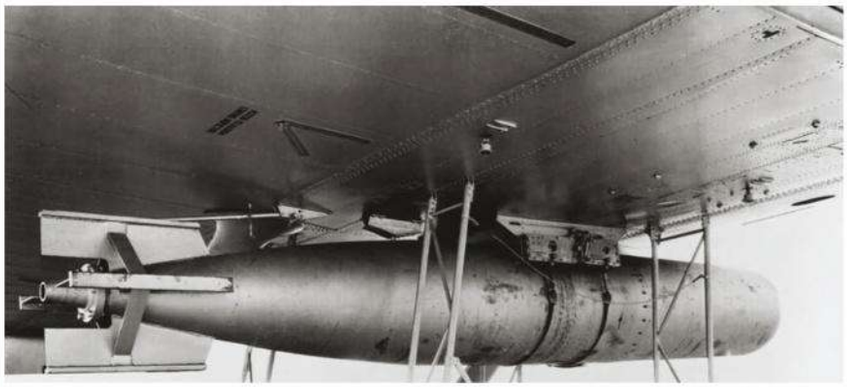
Illustration: Nicholas Forder

Images Alamy

ARMAMENT

The Catalina carried up to 4,000lb (1,814kg) of air-dropped munitions, usually small bombs or depth-charges for attacking submarines, on pylons under the inner wings. Two torpedoes could also be carried, one under each wing. The aircraft had two 7.62mm (0.30in) machine guns in the nose and a third in a retractable ventral position under the rear fuselage. Two blister turrets on either side of the fuselage each carried a single 12.7mm (0.50in) machine gun. Although mainly for self-defence, these weapons could also be used for strafing surface or ground targets.

A US Navy PBY-5a drops a torpedo during the Second World War

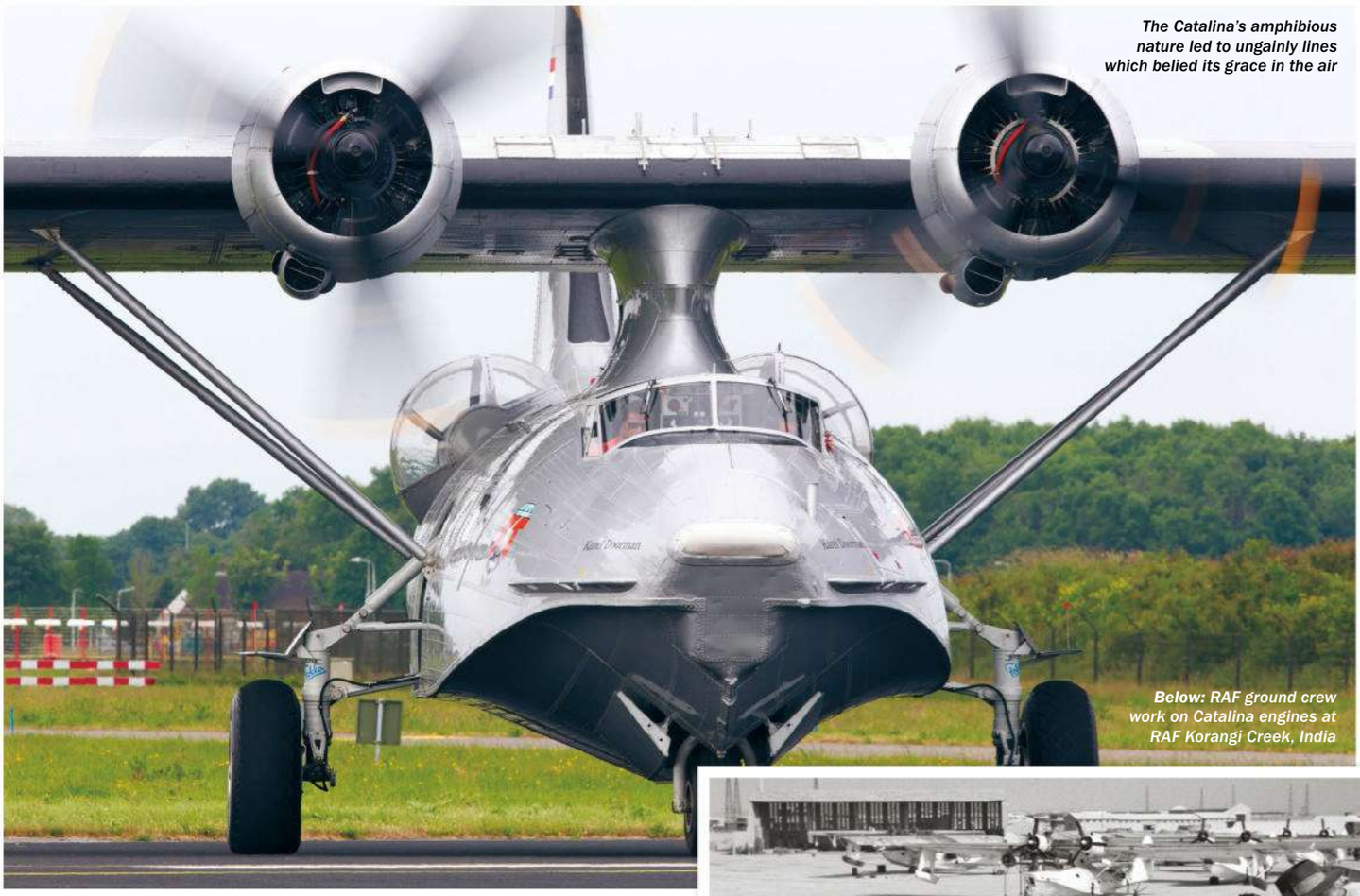


***Above:** A Mk XIII torpedo being test-fitted on a Catalina, 1937*

***Above:** A US press photographer poses in a waist blister, giving an indication of the incredible field of view the turrets provided*

"SOME 173,618 TWIN WASP ENGINES WERE MADE, AND MANY WARBIRDS ARE STILL FLYING WITH THEM TODAY"

A Catalina of VP-61 patrolling over Alaska, March 1943



The Catalina's amphibious nature led to ungainly lines which belied its grace in the air

Below: RAF ground crew work on Catalina engines at RAF Korangi Creek, India

DESIGN

The PBY was a flying boat with a two-step hull (to ease breaking contact with the surface on take-off). The wing was held high up in a parasol configuration on a substantial pedestal to ensure the engines and propellers had sufficient clearance from the surface. The tail was also set high to provide suitable clearance, especially during take-offs and landings. The construction of the wings, using plate-and-stringer type structures, allowed large internal cavities to be used for fuel storage.

ENGINE

The Catalina used two Pratt and Whitney R1830 Twin Wasp radial piston engines. With 14 cylinders, the engine was air-cooled and had a 30ltr capacity. The -92 version used by the PBY-5 could generate 12,000hp (890kW) of thrust on take-off. The Twin Wasp was a rugged and reliable engine, ideal for the extremely long ranges the Catalina operated over, and was also used in many contemporary aircraft including Consolidated B-24 Liberators and Douglas Dakotas. Some 173,618 Twin Wasps were made, and many warbirds are still flying with them today.

Mechanics close up an engine panel after starting at Corpus Christi Naval Base, 1942

Images Alamy

A cut-away Catalina fuselage in the US National Naval Aviation Museum, Florida, showing the crew compartments

COCKPIT & CREW COMPARTMENT

The crew areas of the Catalina were unpressurised but generally spacious and comfortable. The broad fuselage allowed a large number of passengers, including personnel rescued from the sea, to be carried. A crew rest area, including bunks, was situated in the rear fuselage for use on long patrols. The pilots enjoyed a largely uncluttered cockpit, with excellent views, as many of the aircraft's instruments were located in the flight engineer's position in the pedestal. Here, the flight engineer was responsible for the bulk of the monitoring of the engines and other systems.

The cockpit of a still-airworthy Catalina, showing the relatively basic instrumentation for an aircraft that size

"CATALINAS WERE A CRUCIAL COMMUNICATIONS LINK BETWEEN AUSTRALIA AND BRITAIN, COVERING A STRETCH OF OVER 4,000 MILES BETWEEN AUSTRALIA AND CEYLON"

A US Coast Guard Catalina rescues a downed aircrew

SERVICE HISTORY

Catalinas were involved in several notable firsts during the Second World War, including the first Allied casualty of the Pacific War, an RAF Catalina shot down by the Japanese off Malaya on 7 December 1941. The type also achieved the US Navy's first air-to-air victory of the war, three days later. Its role in hunting the Bismarck and in the Battle of Midway have already been noted, and some 40 German U-Boats were sunk by Catalinas. Two Catalina aircrew received Victoria Crosses.

Less glamorously, PBYs put in thousands of hours of patrols all around the world, attacking enemy shipping and rescuing aircrew and sailors from the sea. The Australians used the type as a night bomber, and Qantas-operated Catalinas were a crucial communications link between Australia and Britain, covering a stretch of over 4,000 miles (6,400km) between Australia and Ceylon (Sri Lanka). The last operational Catalina supplied Brazilian outposts on the Amazon until 1982.

***Below:** A Catalina in the 'Black Cats' livery of the famous Royal Australian Air Force night bombers, who operated in the Pacific*

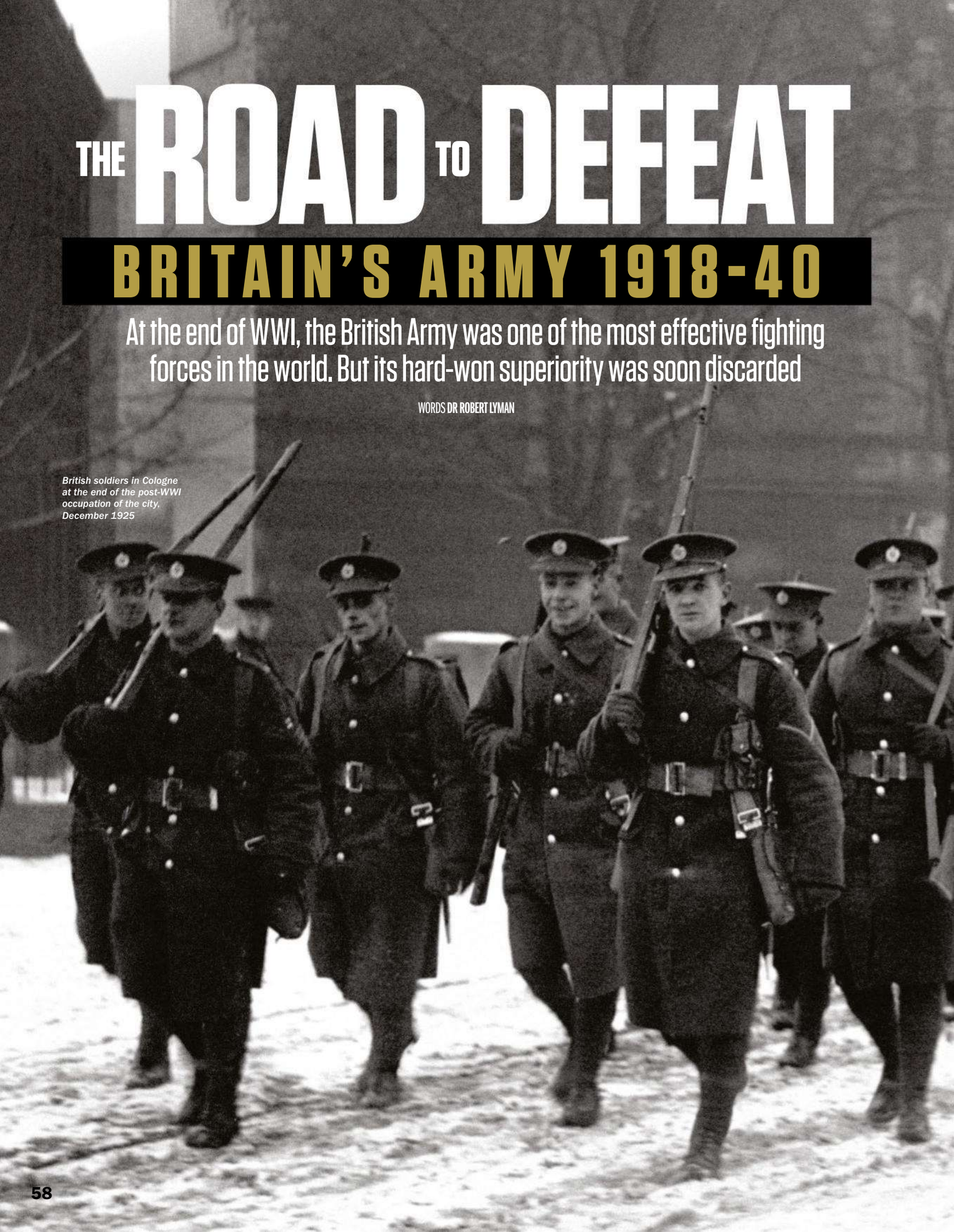
Images Alamy

THE ROAD TO DEFEAT

BRITAIN'S ARMY 1918-40

At the end of WWI, the British Army was one of the most effective fighting forces in the world. But its hard-won superiority was soon discarded

WORDS **DR ROBERT LYMAN**



British soldiers in Cologne at the end of the post-WWI occupation of the city, December 1925

There was a fleeting moment, during the One Hundred Days battles that ended the First World War in France, in which successful all-arms manoeuvre by the British and Commonwealth armies, able to overturn the deadlock of previous years of trench stalemate, was glimpsed. But the moment, for the British Army at least, was not understood for what it was. With hindsight we can see that it was the birth of modern warfare, in which armour, infantry, artillery and air power are welded together able successfully to fight and win a campaign against a similarly equipped enemy.

Unfortunately in the intervening 20 years the British Army forgot how to fight a peer adversary in intensive combat. It did not recognise 1918 for what it was: a defining moment in the development of warfare that needed capturing and translating into a doctrine on which the future of the British Army could be built. The tragedy of the inter-war years therefore was that much of what had been learned at such high cost in blood and treasure between 1914 and 1918 was simply forgotten.

This provides a warning for our modern Army that once it goes, the ability to fight intensively at campaign level is incredibly hard to recover. *Victory to Defeat,* co-authored by General Lord Dannatt and myself, traces this loss of fighting knowledge after the end of the war, and explains the reasons for it. Knowledge so expensively learned vanished very quickly as the Army quickly adjusted back to its pre-war raison d'etre: imperial policing. Unsurprisingly, it was what many miliary men wanted: a return to the certainties of 1914. It was certainly what the government wanted: no more wartime extravagance of taxpayers' scarce resources. The Great War was seen by nearly everyone to be an aberration never to be repeated.

The British and Commonwealth armies were dramatically successful in 1918 and defeated the German armies on the battlefield. Far from the 'stab in the back' myth pushed by the Nazis and others, the Allies fatally stabbed the German Army in the chest in 1918.

The memoirs of those who experienced action are helpful in demonstrating just how far the British and Commonwealth armies had moved since the black days of 1 July 1916. The 27-year old Second Lieutenant Duff Cooper, of the 3rd Battalion The Grenadier Guards, waited with the men of 10 platoon at Saulty on the Somme for the opening phase of the advance to the much-vaunted Hindenburg Line. His diaries show that his experience was as far distant from those of the Somme in 1916 as night is from day. There is no sense in Cooper's diaries that either he or his men felt anything but equal to the task. They were expecting a hard fight, but not a slaughter. Why? Because they had confidence in the training, their tactics of forward infiltration, their platoon weapons and a palpable sense that the army was operating as one. They were confident that their enemy could be beaten.

On the morning of 21 August 1918 the barrage began. It was the loudest he had ever heard. At 5.20am on the dot, without any whistles, bugles or shouted exhortations, the men arose from the ground and advanced into the darkness, going forward in groups around the two Lewis gun teams. The mist was so thick that the platoon very quickly got lost. In fact they strayed far to the south of their axis of advance. The battlefield was all confusion, but it didn't seem to matter. 10 Platoon, as they had been instructed, just kept going in what Cooper hoped to be the right

Right: *British and French troops on the Maginot Line in December 1939. The BEF was woefully unprepared to counter the Nazi offensive in Europe at the start of WWII*

direction. Every now and again they bumped into groups of men from other battalions. His diary recorded:

"We met an officer in the Coldstream with a platoon. He said the Scots Guards had failed to get their objective, that everyone was lost and that the trench we were in was full of Germans. I said I would work down the trench, which I thought was Moyblain, our first objective, and clear it of the enemy… After this I pressed on alone with my platoon, guiding myself roughly by the sound of our guns behind us. We were occasionally held up by machine gun fire and we met one or two stray parties of Scots Guards without officers. Finally we met a fairly large party of the Shropshires, who I knew should be on our right. The officer with them did not know where he was, but we agreed to go on together."

Occasionally small groups of enemy were discovered in trenches and posts scattered across a deep battlefield. The concentrated Lewis gun fire usually quickly disposed of any potential opposition. When a trench needed to be taken the machine guns would attack from one side and grenadiers – men with especially strengthened Lee Enfield rifles with grenade attachments on their muzzles, capable of throwing a Mills bomb up to 200 yards – would attack from another. The assault sections – men with rifles and bags full of grenades – would only crawl up to the enemy trench under the cover of machine guns and the bombs fired by the grenadiers. Cooper found no difficulty in clearing enemy trenches. Each one that they attacked, fell. After an initial fight most enemy surrendered, the prisoners being sent back to the rear, before the platoon gathered itself together and continued on.

They knew they couldn't miss their objective – the railway line running south from Arras. They'd been practising on models carefully built in the ground for the past week. After a while Cooper realised that he'd drifted far to the right, bumping up to the village of Courcelles le Comte. He needed to move left. As he did so they encountered a machine gun firing straight down the road at them along the obvious route for him to take. The broken bodies of its earlier victims lay scattered on the road. Just then a lone Mark V tank trundled up through the early morning mist, also lost. When they called for its assistance, the tank advanced up the road and dealt with the machine gun, the men of 10 Platoon following on either side of the road through the fields. Reaching their objective, a building on the railway embankment, the Lewis guns made short work of the German defenders, those not being killed tumbling out with their hands raised.

So went Cooper's war. Despite the expected confusion of the battlefield he did what he had been instructed: carry on forward in the direction of the objective, only fighting those enemy that directly imperilled his advance. The artillery barrage had opened the battle for them by targeting enemy machine gun positions, command and control bunkers and artillery positions, as well as plastering the front trenches of the Hindenburg Line. The aim was to knock out the German defenders' ability to strike back against the hundreds of dispersed platoons of British troops infiltrating through and behind the German positions. Cooper's men were told not to stay and fight for individual trenches if they didn't need to, but to keep pressing on; isolated enemy positions could be cleared up later by troops following behind. This was no longer a linear battlefield with everyone going forward in choreographed unison, but one in which semi-autonomous groups of machine gun- and grenade-equipped infantry infiltrated their way forward to objectives far to the enemy's rear. The short bombardment was designed not to destroy

Winston Churchill inspects British troops on a visit to the British Army of Occupation at Cologne, August 1919

"THE LEWIS GUNS MADE SHORT WORK OF THE GERMAN DEFENDERS, THOSE NOT BEING KILLED TUMBLING OUT WITH THEIR HANDS RAISED"

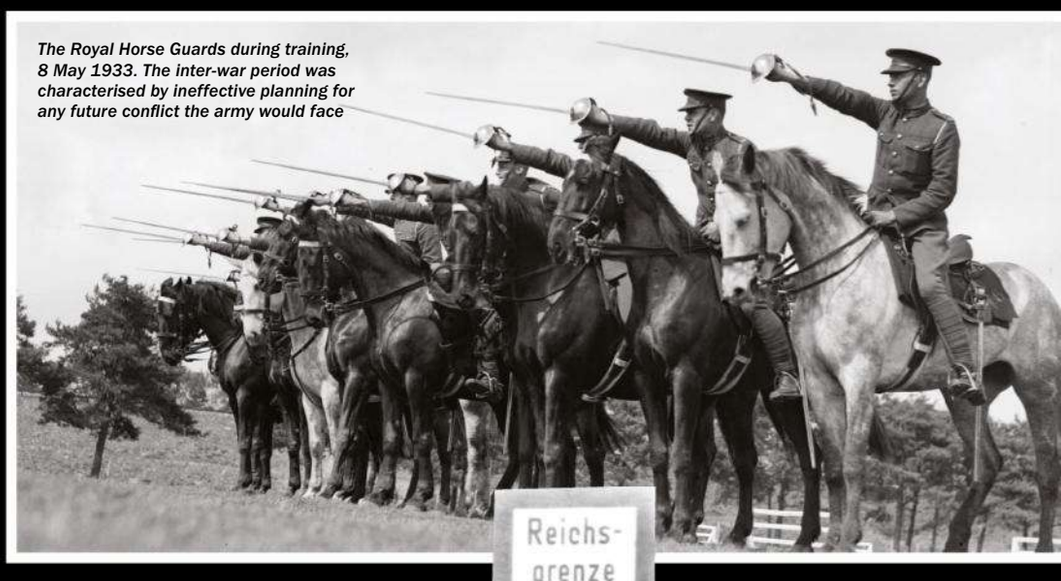
the enemy trenches, but simply to provide the opportunity for the British assault platoons to get into and across the first German positions while their occupants were still down in their deep bunkers underground.

The wider battle in which Cooper fought and distinguished himself – he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his exploits in August 1918, an unusual award for a platoon commander – was a very different one to that which remains firmly lodged in Britain's corporate cultural memory of the Great War. The shoulder-to-shoulder infantry advance that for most people captures the horror of the Battle of the Somme on its inglorious first day on 1 July 1916 had long disappeared. Battalions were given objectives to secure and a considerable degree of latitude in how to achieve them. In the case of Cooper's battalion of the Grenadier Guards on 21 August the plan entailed two forward companies advancing towards the railway line under a creeping barrage, supported by tanks. A heavy initial artillery barrage would send the Germans scurrying for the safety of their deep bunkers, there to await an attack, they thought, perhaps several days later. On this occasion, however, the British assault platoons would be in the enemy front-line trenches long before they were aware of their presence. Companies and their platoons were expected to fight their way forward, independently if necessary, relying on the initiative of their junior leaders, who would make decisions based on their training and the circumstances of the battlefield as they found it. Once the first two companies had secured their positions, two further companies would pass through each of them, carrying on the advance to the next bound. During this advance they would be supported by the rifle and machine gun fire of the first two companies, who by now would have dug themselves into hasty 'shell scrapes', prepared to see off any attempt by the enemy at a counter-attack and to protect themselves from incoming artillery fire.

Each of the ten platoons deployed for the attack (about 40 men in each) was based on four sections, three of riflemen/grenadiers and one with two of the portable gas-operated Lewis machine guns introduced in 1916. The rifle sections were equipped with rifles, hand grenades and dedicated rifles adapted with cup-dischargers on their ends, which threw the Mills bomb on a seven-second fuse up to 200 yards. Rifles were now subordinate to the hand grenade and the cup-discharger.

Rather than being riflemen in the old sense, in which the bullet and bayonet were standard, the men were now effectively machine gunners or grenadiers, weighed down with hessian or canvas sacks full of grenades for hand throwing and firing from the cup-dischargers.

In the machine gun section, rifles were secondary, self-defence weapons only, with the men grouped around the two guns. Two gunners were responsible for firing each weapon, with two or three men supporting each gun by carrying, changing and re-filling its 47-round circular magazines. The old (pre-1916) concept of a platoon consisting of three or four equal sections of riflemen equipped with a Lee Enfield rife and bayonet had passed into history, at least on the Western Front. The 1918 version of the infantry platoon was one in which the primary



The Royal Horse Guards during training, 8 May 1933. The inter-war period was characterised by ineffective planning for any future conflict the army would face

Nazi forces cross the border into Czechoslovakia to occupy the Sudetenland, 1 October 1938

British Army of the Rhine peace celebrations in Cologne, 19 July 1919, following end of WWI

British soldiers march past well-wishers as they prepare to leave for France, September 1939

British troops in Cologne warm themselves in the harsh conditions, 1 December 1925

weapons were the machine gun and grenade. Likewise, the artillery had seen an equally dramatic evolution and, of course, tanks had first joined the battlefield in 1917.

The British Army of late 1918 had become something that a combined arms manoeuvre army of modern times would recognise. It fought its battles based on a mastery of an artillery-dominant offensive in which machine gun-equipped infantry worked closely with tanks, combat engineers and aircraft, deploying a relatively sophisticated approach to warfighting in which a single weapon was crafted from its many constituent parts. It was built on the bloody experience of battle.

By the end of the year the British Army had mastered what might be described as 'methodical' warfare. It understood every constituent element required to undertake successful battle in a step-by-step manner. Methodical battle was designed to unpick the enemy's defensive lock one piece at a time. The fast mechanised (and sometimes armoured) troop transport, and mobile artillery, supported by ground-support aircraft such as tactical bombers and dive-bombers, all glued together by radio communications, were the next advance in tactical and operational thinking. This would, in a future war, enable more dynamic or fluid operations, where decisions could be made spontaneously as battle took place. It would allow for smarter warfighting.

Dynamic warfare, by contrast, allowed for the attacker to look at other ways to defeating the enemy operationally, rather than attacking their defensive positions head on. Dynamic warfare allowed the attacker to identify positions, infrastructure or localities that were critical to the enemy's ability to continue fighting. Strong defensive positions could therefore be bypassed and allowed to wither on the vine if a more strategic target, such as a headquarters location, railway junction or supply depot behind the front lines, offered itself as a target. It might be that battlefield superiority could be achieved by bypassing the fixed defences entirely, if this would demoralise the enemy and force them to turn back or attempt to reorganise themselves to defeat a line of attack they were not expecting. This discombobulation was key to German success in northern France in 1940. The Great War did not allow for dynamic warfare, but it did allow for the expert development of methodical warfare, its essential precursor.

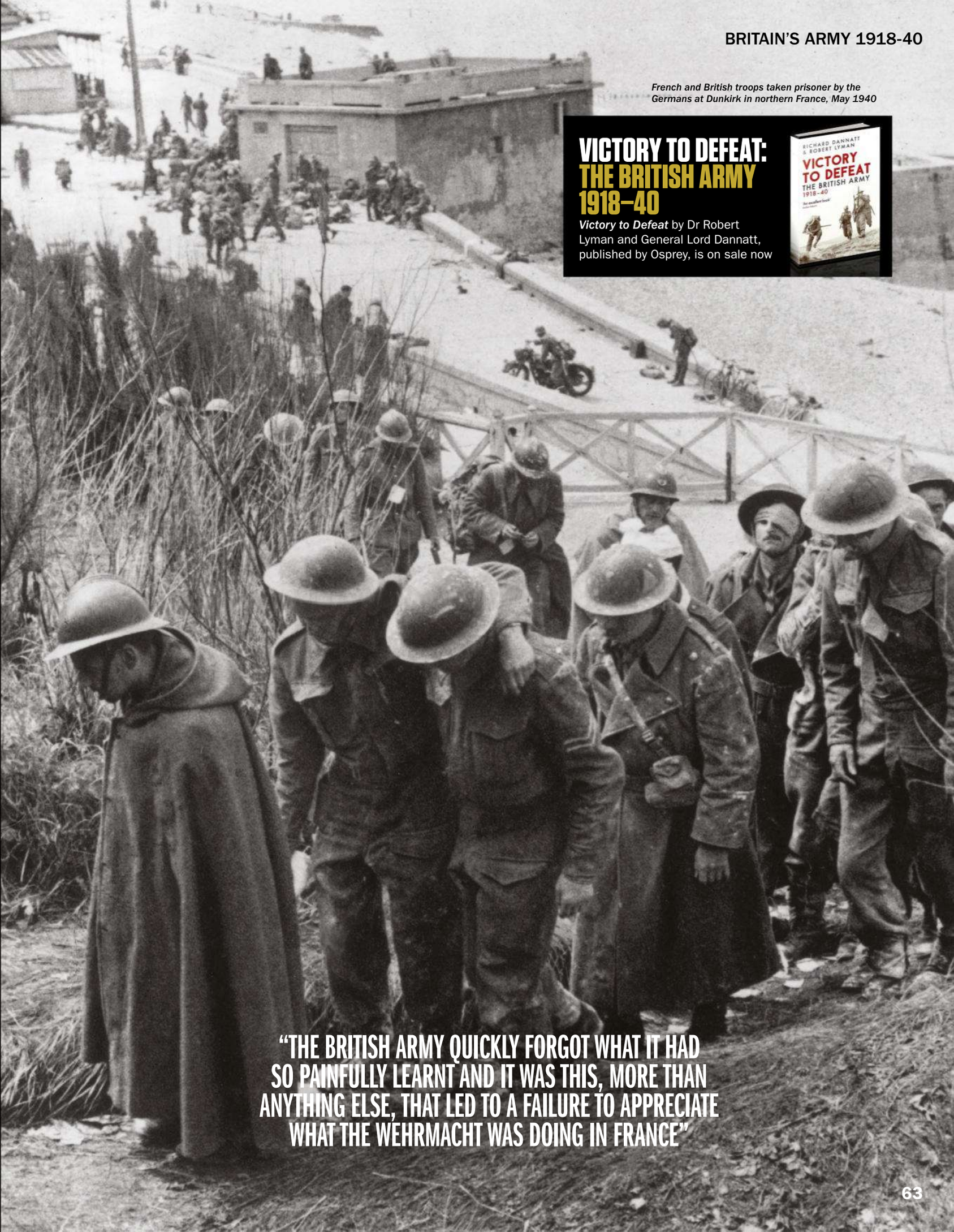
The Hundred Days taught the British Army that at the heart of warfighting lies the premise that successful campaigns strike not just at the enemy's military mass and its physical capability (its tanks, infantry, artillery, air power and so on) but also its ability to command and direct its forces, as well as the morale of both commanders and men, and their individual and collective will to fight and win. It reflects the need of an army to adapt to meet the ever-changing demands of a complex battlefield. It also reflects the need for a command philosophy that allows subordinate commanders at all levels of the rank structure to understand their commander's intent, while executing operations according to the local circumstances, but always within a set of sensible rules laid down in the fighting manuals. Herein lay battlefield success, and provides the context for the advance of Cooper's 10 Platoon towards their objective on the Hindenburg Line. The successive victories in 1918 didn't just unravel Germany's military power, but attacked its self-belief, persuading many that their sacrifice would be in vain were they to fight to the death. An army does not need to be defeated in detail on the battlefield, but its soldiers need to believe that they have lost. That army is indeed then beaten.

It would take the next war for dynamic warfare to be developed. It would first be mastered by the losers in 1918 – the Germans. The moment the war ended, the ideas and approaches that had been developed at great expense were discarded as irrelevant to the peace. They weren't written down to be used as the basis for training the post-war army. Flanders was seen as a horrific aberration, which no right-thinking individual would ever attempt to repeat. Combined with a sudden raft of new operational commitments – in the remnants of the Ottoman Empire, Russia and Ireland – the British Army quickly reverted to its pre-1914 role as imperial policemen. No attempt was made to capture the lessons of the First World War until 1932, and where warfighting was considered it tended to be about the role of the tank on the future battlefield. This debate took place in the public arena by advocates writing newspaper articles to advance their arguments. These ideas were half-heartedly taken up by the Army in the later half of the 1920s but quietly dropped in the early 1930s. The debates about the tank and the nature of future war were bizarrely not regarded as existential to the Army and they were left to die away on the periphery of military life.

The 1920s and 1930s were a low point in national considerations about the purpose of the British Army. It quickly forgot what it had so painfully learnt and it was this, more than anything else, that led to a failure to appreciate what the Wehrmacht was doing in France in 1940 and North Africa in 1941-42.

The army in which Cooper and the men of 10 Platoon were a part in 1918 was at the top of its game. Victory for the British Army in 1918 was brought about as a result of the tactical skill of its well-equipped and well-trained machine gun-equipped infantry working closely with artillery, tanks, combat engineers and aircraft, deploying a relatively sophisticated approach to warfighting It was built on the bloody experience of battle, as this warfighting methodology had been developed directly as a result of what had been learned day-by-day on this new type of battlefield. Although mistakes continued to be made and men continued to die, they did so in relatively fewer numbers and for greater purpose. Most British commanders demonstrated that they were able to master the intricacies of the modern battlefield. The British Army was, in late 1918, an impressive, war-winning weapon. The tragedy for the decades that followed was that this mastery was thrown away, and had to be re-learned the hard way after the debacle of 1940.

Images: Alamy, Getty



French and British troops taken prisoner by the Germans at Dunkirk in northern France, May 1940

VICTORY TO DEFEAT: THE BRITISH ARMY 1918–40

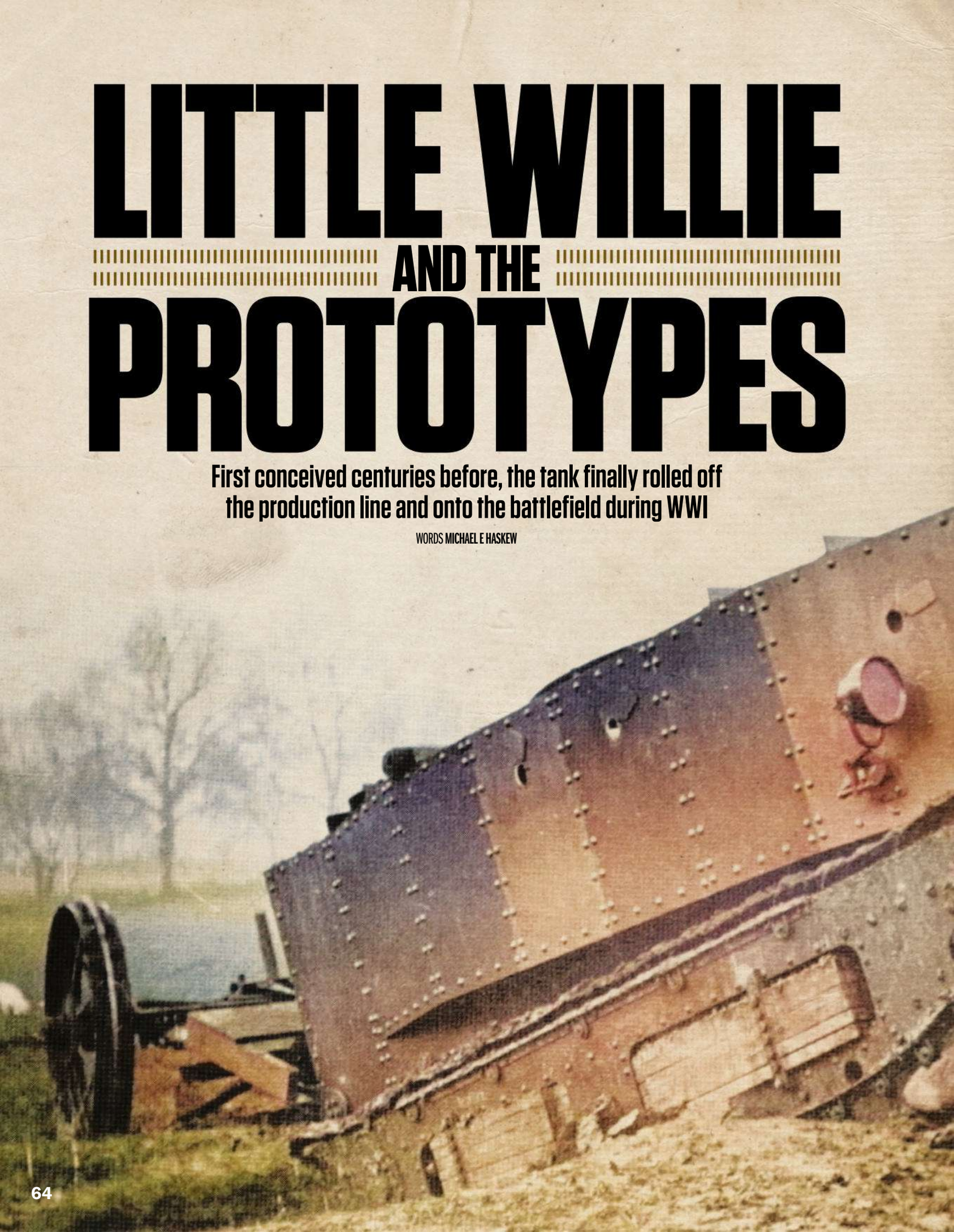
Victory to Defeat by Dr Robert Lyman and General Lord Dannatt, published by Osprey, is on sale now

"THE BRITISH ARMY QUICKLY FORGOT WHAT IT HAD SO PAINFULLY LEARNT AND IT WAS THIS, MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE, THAT LED TO A FAILURE TO APPRECIATE WHAT THE WEHRMACHT WAS DOING IN FRANCE"

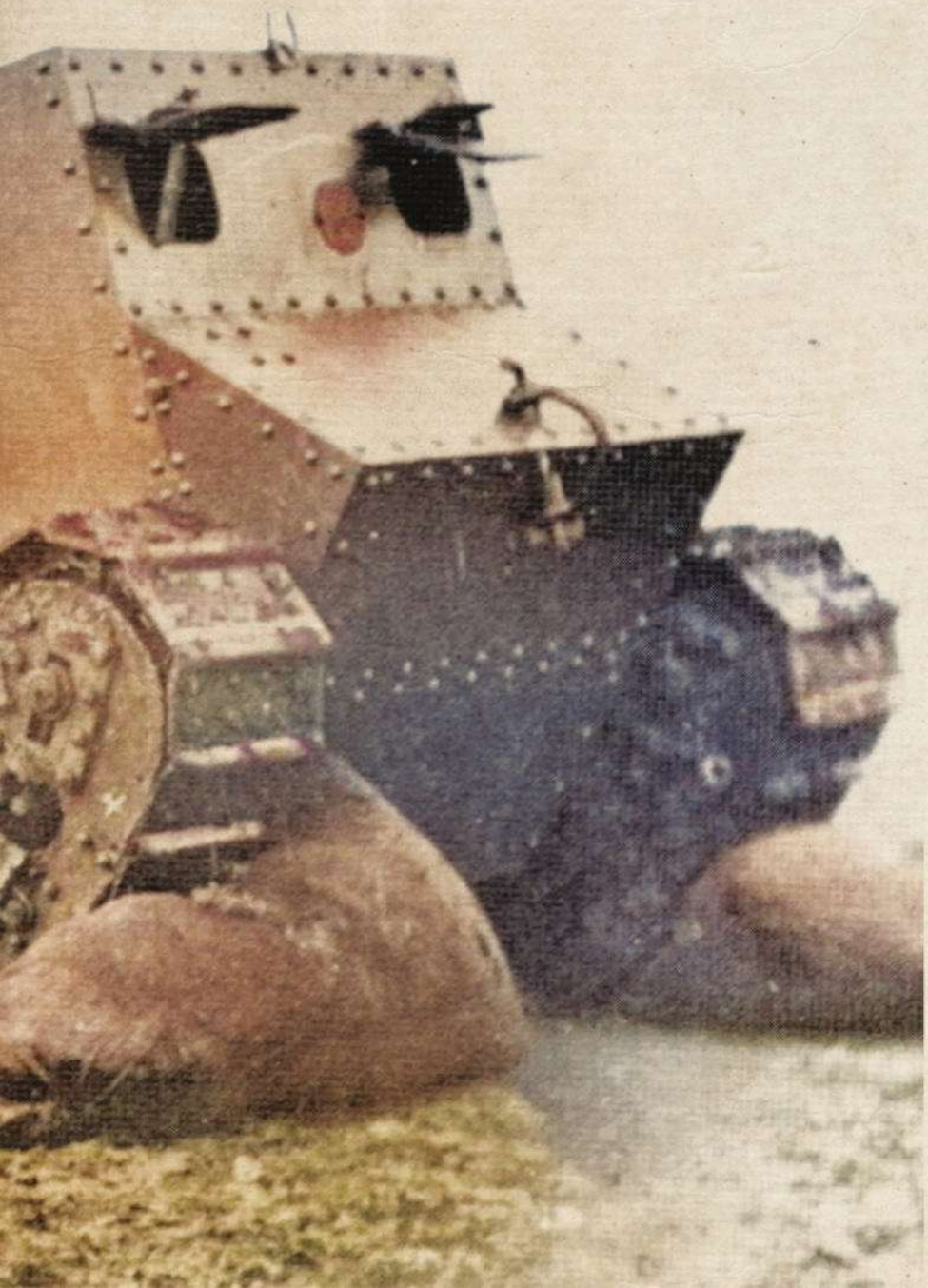
LITTLE WILLIE AND THE PROTOTYPES

First conceived centuries before, the tank finally rolled off the production line and onto the battlefield during WWI

WORDS MICHAEL E HASKEW



This Belgian Minerva armoured car and crew were photographed in November 1914 during WWI



In the December 1903 edition of the *Strand Magazine*, science fiction author HG Wells penned a dark vision of the battlefield of the future. Mammoth armoured fighting vehicles dominated the landscape, rolling inexorably forward against the enemy, spewing a heavy volume of fire. Wells called these war vehicles "ironclads" and described them as "…essentially long, narrow, and very strong steel frameworks carrying the engines, and borne upon eight pairs of big pedrail wheels, each about ten feet in diameter, each a driving wheel and set upon long axles free to swivel round a common axis. This arrangement gave them the maximum of adaptability to the contours of the ground. They crawled level along the ground with one foot high upon a hillock and another deep in a depression, and they could hold themselves erect and steady sideways upon even a steep hillside."

Wells seemed to foresee the advent of the tank and its potential on the battlefield. However, the concept of the armoured fighting vehicle exerting its sheer power in battle was not his alone. The ancient Greeks had their own tank of sorts: the phalanx. It was formed by hoplite warriors interlocking their shields to ward off spears, arrows and sword thrusts while attacking as a single unit – an ancient tank if you will. The chariots of the Bronze Age also reflected the notion of the tank, providing speed and firepower to the armies of Assyria, Egypt and even Alexander the Great.

Four hundred years before the tank appeared on the battlefield during the First World War, Renaissance artist and inventor Leonardo da Vinci designed his own armoured fighting vehicle. Studded with gun ports, da Vinci's tank design demonstrated that the theory of such a transformational weapon was possible and perhaps at some point practical. His conceptual tank of the 15th century was designed as a circular vehicle powered by men turning a pair of large cranks that propelled a system of wheels. The balance of weight, firepower and mobility had been identified.

The concept of the modern tank was facilitated by the emergence of ancillary technology. Armour plating was developed first for the protection of warships, while advances in weaponry – such as the machine gun, large-calibre rifled cannon and the reliable shoulder arm – were accompanied by advances with the internal combustion engine, progressing from steam to petrol power, and the invention of the caterpillar track in the late 19th century/early 20th century. In combination, it was no great leap to theorise that the tank might become a war-winning weapon in its own right. One of the key components of early tank manufacture was the Holt tractor, which utilised the caterpillar track and was in widespread use as a mover for artillery and vehicle recovery during the Great War.

During the Boer Wars, British engineers experimented with steam power, but great leaps in the development of the petrol engine spurred speculation and research into the armoured fighting vehicle across Europe. The precursor to the first operational tank was the armoured car, or 'war car', and the Belgian Army led the way with the open-topped armed Minerva.

By 1916, Royal Navy Petty Officer L Gutteridge had designed an armoured car based on the Ford Model T that entered service with other types. The French Charron, Girardot et Voigt, a 1902 design, may rightly be labelled as the first true military armoured car.

Across Europe inventive military officers and engineers proffered ideas for wheeled, tracked and armoured fighting vehicles. A French Army captain named Léon Levavasseur pursued his "automobile cannon project". Austrian Army lieutenant Gunther Burstyn designed his motor vehicle gun – the first of its kind to employ a turret – in 1911, but it was rejected, and German tank development lapsed completely until the First World War. Imperial Russia was in the throes of political turmoil during the period, but engineer Aleksandr Porokhovschikova worked on his Vezdekhod all-terrain

Images: Alamy, Getty

The Leonardo da Vinci tank design of the 15th century was circular and studded with gun ports

Lieutenant Colonel Ernest Swinton was an early advocate for the development of British tanks

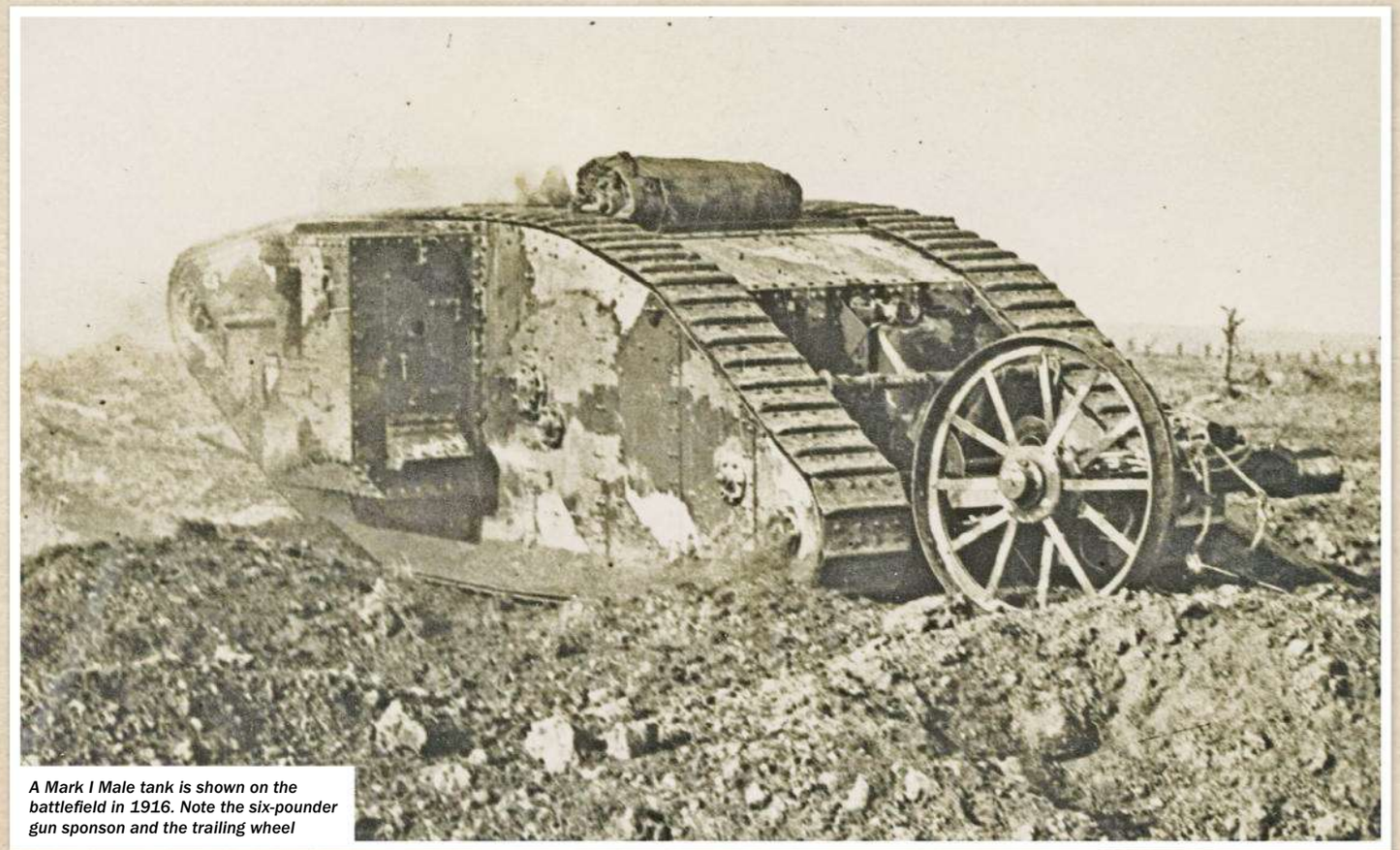
Little Willie is on display at The Tank Museum in Bovington, England

vehicle, protected by 0.3in (8mm) of armour in overlapping sheets, the world's first vehicle with such layered protection. Russian shipyard engineer Vasily Mendeleev was concurrently designing a 170-ton behemoth intended to be transported to the battlefield on a rail car and then lowered to the ground.

Australian engineer Lancelot Eldin de Mole proposed a tank design to the British War Office in 1912, but he was turned away due to the War Office's perceived lack of military necessity. De Mole put forth two more tank designs after the outbreak of the Great War. In 1914 and 1916 his ideas were discounted not only because of indifference but also because much of his material was simply set aside or misplaced. Only after the war was his contribution to overall British tank design acknowledged by a special proclamation from an appointed royal commission.

With the outbreak of the First World War, Britain stepped to the forefront of tank development. A quantity of Holt tractors had been purchased and field tested at Aldershot, supposedly on the recommendation of Lieutenant Colonel Ernest Swinton, appointed as a war correspondent by Secretary of State for War Lord Kitchener. While driving from St Omer to Calais on 1 October 1914, Swinton surveyed the French countryside and imagined the Holt tractor configured as a weapon of war. He reported the theory to Sir Maurice Hankey, secretary of the War Council.

In turn, Hankey used key contacts within the Royal Navy, which already had more experience in armoured cars than other branches of the military, and First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill eagerly formed



A Mark I Male tank is shown on the battlefield in 1916. Note the six-pounder gun sponson and the trailing wheel

the Landship Committee, composed of naval officers, government officials and engineers. By the summer of 1915, Major Walter G Wilson and Sir William A Tritton, an authority on agricultural machinery, had spearheaded the development of a prototype.

Initially called the Number 1 Lincoln Machine, this small armoured vehicle became known as 'Little Willie'. Weighing just over 18 tons, its armour was configured from boiler plate. It mounted a Vickers two-pounder gun and at least one secondary machine gun. Powered by a 105-horsepower Foster-Daimler Knight sleeve-valve gasoline engine, Little Willie's top speed was 2mph (3.2km/h). A pair of trailing wheels assisted the tracked vehicle's steering, and in trials Little Willie climbed a 1ft (30cm) high obstacle and traversed a 5ft (1.5m) ditch.

Enthusiasm grew for the potential of Little Willie, spurring the go-ahead for a larger prototype, dubbed 'Big Willie' or 'Mother'. Substantially longer than Little Willie, Mother included sponsons on each flank to support 6in (15cm) naval guns. In trials at Hatfield Park in January 1916, Mother demonstrated the benefit of a lower centre of gravity, crossing a trench that was 9ft (2.7m) wide and climbing a berm that was 6.5ft (1.9m) high. Although there were obvious omissions, including an adequate suspension system to absorb the continual shock of cross-country movement, the designers were pleased.

A month later, a group of dignitaries, office holders and high-ranking military men were invited to a demonstration. As Mother was put through its paces, Lord Kitchener scoffed that the vehicle was a "mechanical toy" and a war would "never be won by such machines". But Chancellor of the Exchequer Reginald McKenna and Minister of Munitions David Lloyd George were impressed. An order was placed for 100 vehicles, and the type was designated the Mark I.

When Mother entered production, every effort was made to maintain secrecy, and the word was intentionally spread that the massive objects being assembled were water tanks. The word "tank" stuck, and some historians believe that it had been suggested by none other than Lieutenant Colonel Swinton.

As it came off the assembly line, the Mark I tank weighed 31 tons (28,122kg), required a crew of eight soldiers and was protected by riveted armour plate. Two main variants were completed. The 'Male' tank was armed with sponson-mounted six-pounder guns along with a pair of 7.7mm Hotchkiss or Lewis machine guns mounted at either side of the hull. The 'Female' variant was armed solely with 7.7mm machine guns, five or six as the situation dictated. The former was intended to subdue enemy strongpoints with its cannon, while the latter would be deployed as an anti-infantry weapon.

The Mark I received the honour of making the combat debut of the tank on the modern battlefield at Flers-Courcelette in 1916. From the outset, an effort to improve the design was underway. The Mark I had been prone to mechanical failure, and its 105-horsepower Daimler-Knight engine made it a slow-moving target. On the battlefield it was particularly susceptible to becoming immobilised in shell holes or deep trenches. Subsequently, the Mark II and Mark III were produced in limited numbers for training purposes, and the Mark IV, a substantial improvement, became the primary British tank of the Great War. A total of 1,220 Mark IV tanks were produced during the war, and the later Mark V was even better.

Meanwhile, Tritton reasoned that a light, fast tank might be useful in the exploitation of any breach in enemy lines achieved by the heavier tanks and supporting infantry. He designed the Tritton Chaser, which he later christened the 'Whippet', and with it a new dimension of tactical armoured warfare dawned.

Amid British progress, other European military establishments also awakened to the potential for the armoured fighting vehicle. In France, General Jean Baptiste Eugène Estienne earned the sobriquet 'father of the tank'. He championed the development of the Schneider CA 1, while rivals Colonel Émile Rimailho and government official Jules-Louis Breton designed the Saint-Chamond. However, the Renault FT-17 light tank, with its 360-degree rotating turret, should probably be considered the best tank of the Great War.

The US Army formed a tank corps in late 1917 and bought some FT-17s from France. Tank development in the US was not earnestly undertaken until after the country entered WWI. In Germany, experimentation with the light LK I and LK II tanks occurred in the spring of 1917. However, the only German tank to reach the battlefield was an ungainly behemoth called the A7V.

Although tank warfare was in its infancy, the stage had been set for rapid technological advancement and the furtherance of a revolutionary weapon of future land battles.

Images: Alamy, Getty

THE TANK TAKES THE FIELD

With a forboding metallic rattle, the first tanks destined for war rolled onto the churned fields of the Somme in 1916

The very nature of warfare changed forever on 15 September 1916 with the debut of the tank at the Battle of Flers-Courcelette during an Allied offensive on the Somme. The Great War was moving towards its third year, and Allied grand strategy envisioned a concerted effort to breach the German lines along the axis where the French and British armies met in Picardy, near the River Somme.

However, the German offensive at Verdun altered the Allied plan as the French were required to transfer reinforcements to the south. The Somme offensive was subsequently modified into an effort to relieve mounting pressure on the French defending Verdun. In the event, the Somme offensive itself became one of the bloodiest military encounters in history, and after more than four months it had ground to a stalemate.

The Battle of Flers-Courcelette was intended to break the deadlock on the Somme, and the tank, a new and untried weapon of war, was seen as the sledgehammer that might shatter the enemy's strong line of resistance. In preparation for the mid-September assault, the British moved 49 Mark I tanks to assembly areas, and following a preparatory artillery barrage they were ordered to advance in sections of two or three.

Movement to the start line had been a challenge in itself as mechanical breakdowns reduced the number of Mark Is to 36. The artillery bombardment was directed to preserve lanes of approach and thereby avoid creating shell holes that might impede the progress of the armour, while British officers realised that the tanks would draw German fire and ordered accompanying infantry to advance some distance behind the leading machines.

In the opening minutes of the main assault 14 British tanks were lost to mechanical failures or immobilised by battlefield obstacles. Only 18 of the Mark I tanks actually reached the German lines, with nine staying in the fight long enough to attack enemy positions. German machine guns opened fire and bullets clanked off the armoured skins. Inside the tanks temperatures soared and the heavy growl of the engines and exhaust fumes made conditions extremely difficult.

Private JL Addy of the Tank Corps later commented: "When you're enclosed in a tank and there's that much racket, you don't know whether it's shells that's hitting you or what you're doing. The noise of the engine was tremendous, and we had to stand by with a pyrene fire-extinguisher and get ready to shoot it at the engine if it got too hot, because we had 20 gallons [91lt] of petrol on either side of the tank and all round the sides there were racks of ammunition."

The rear-drive mechanism on one tank was hit by shrapnel, causing a loss of control, and the machine eventually careened into a shell hole. Another was immobilised when its tracks

The remains of the main street in Flers

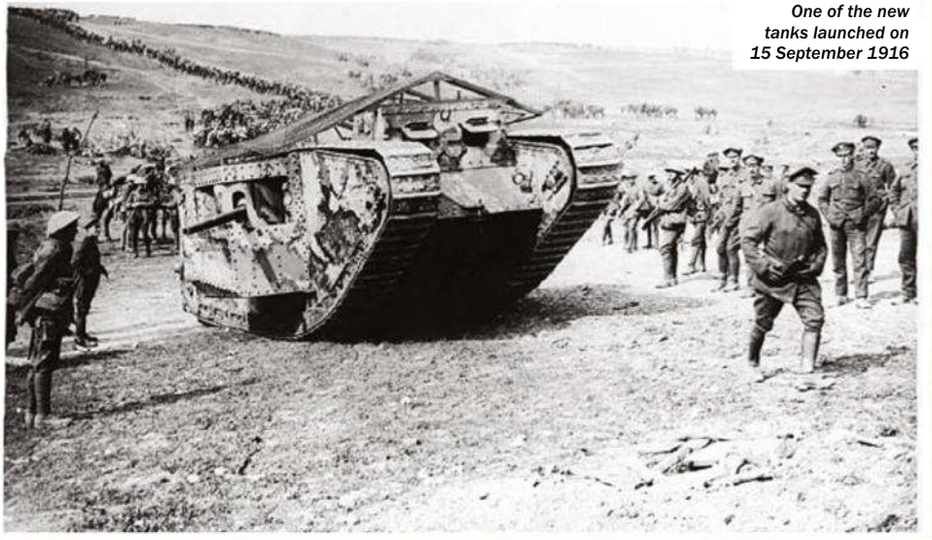
loosened and fell off the caterpillar machinery. Nevertheless, the tanks had an immediate impact, causing many German defenders to take to their heels.

One British soldier later observed of the tanks' impact: "…the moral effect on Fritz the first time we went into action was undoubted".

The tank attack at Flers-Courcelette was hailed in the press. A reporter for the *London Daily Chronicle* crowed: "Over our own trenches in the twilight of the dawn one of those motor-monsters had lurched up, and now it came forward to the rescue, cheered by the assaulting troops who called out words of encouragement to it and laughed, so that some men were laughing even when bullets caught them in the throat. 'Crème de Menthe' was the name given to this particular creature, and it waddled forward right over the old German trenches. There was a whip of silence from the enemy. Then, suddenly, their machine-gun fire burst out in nervous spasms and splashed the sides of 'Crème de Menthe.' But the tank did not mind. The bullets fell from its side harmlessly. From its sides came flashes of fire and a hose of bullets."

The tanks proved vulnerable at times to German machine-gun and artillery fire that was loosed as a response to their advance, but there could be absolutely no doubt that the armour was a viable weapon of war. Despite the setbacks, the tanks did breach the enemy line, rolling across barbed wire obstructions and clearing shallow trenches and depressions to silence German machine gun nests and shoot down enemy infantrymen. Still, some of them were lost in craters or became stuck in ditches and trenches that proved too deep and wide to traverse.

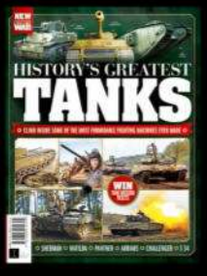
The tanks remained in action for three days and advanced about a mile (1.6km). Although the ground gained did not constitute a major breakthrough, the results were encouraging enough to convince senior Allied officers to continue the development of armour. The Germans, too, would respond in time.



One of the new tanks launched on 15 September 1916

British troops pick their way across the Somme

HISTORY'S GREATEST TANKS IS ON SALE NOW



Images: Alamy, Getty

HITLER'S DREAM OF POWER REQUIRED LOYAL COMMANDERS AND KILLER MACHINES

If Hitler's fantasy of a Germanic empire was to be realised he would need to rely on the courage and competence of military leaders and highly trained units and their cutting-edge equipment. Discover the troops and tools that made Nazi Germany such a formidable foe.

NEW
THE MEN AND MACHINES THAT WAGED THE FÜHRER'S WAR
HITLER'S ELITE
From the makers of
History of War Hitler's Elite
7 DEADLY SOLDIERS
MEET THE WEHRMACHT'S MOST FORMIDABLE TROOPS
GUDERIAN ✠ TIGER TANK ✠ DÖNITZ ✠ FALLSCHIRMJÄGER ✠ MANSTEIN ✠ SKORZENY
ISBN 978-1-80308-881-5

ON SALE NOW

FUTURE

Ordering is easy. Go online at:

magazinesdirect.com

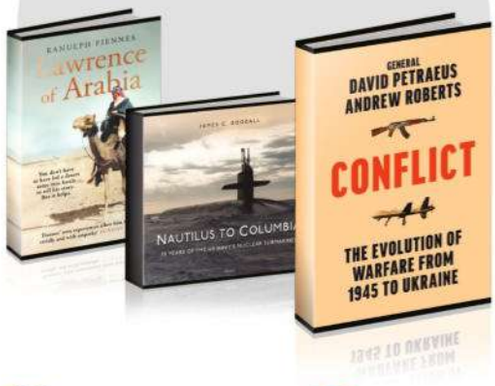
Or get it from selected supermarkets & newsagents

HOME FRONT

76 RIDLEY SCOTT'S NAPOLEON
Historian Dr Zack White explains why this Hollywood biopic should be sentenced to exile

72
Museums and events

76
This month's military history book and film reviews



82
Artefact of War: Waterloo glove

Follow History of War: FACEBOOK /HistoryofWarMag TWITTER @HistoryofWarMag

MUSEUMS & EVENTS

Learn about audacious espionage, the new-look Bletchley Park and British soldiers' experiences of post-war Germany

Spies, Lies and Deception

The Imperial War Museum London's new exhibition tells stories of cunning espionage from the Great War to the present day

Spies, Lies and Deception showcases over 150 objects alongside previously unseen film, photography and specially commissioned interviews to uncover how secret operatives deceive to advance their nation's interests. It focuses on the human stories of espionage, inviting attendees to consider the human costs of being deceived and of having deception uncovered.

While asking challenging questions about the role of espionage in modern conflict, Spies, Lies and Deception also explores the most ingenious and daring clandestine plots in history. Of particular interest are artefacts from Operation Mincemeat, where a dead body with fake military documents was planted off the Spanish shore to fool German High Command about the location of the next major Allied offensive. The trickery behind the story is displayed through the private papers of the mastermind behind Operation Mincemeat, Ewen Montagu.

The exhibition then goes into the golden age of spying, the Cold War. It tells stories of Soviet spy networks stationed in the UK, and how MI5 investigations used phone bugging technology and neighbouring family homes to surveil and uncover the spy rings. This is exactly what happened in Ruislip on the outskirts of west London during the 1960s when the Portland spy ring was rooted out of a suburban neighbourhood.

The Imperial War Museum's latest exhibition then brings us up to date by exploring the ongoing role of spooks in defending our national security from the threat of terrorism. In recent years, MI5 agents have posed as Islamic extremists online to ensnare would-be bomb plotters. In 2017, these operations paid dividends when they supplied a fake explosive device to the terrorist Naa'imur Rahman, allowing for his arrest and imprisonment for a plot to kill Theresa May.

Throughout every period of espionage the Spies, Lies and Deception exhibition covers, one thing is always the same: nothing is quite what it seems. The exhibition displays a huge variety of technology and equipment designed to disguise secret operatives' actions. You will learn how spies adapt to their environment and their means available to deceive at every opportunity. Cunning artefacts include footprint overshoes used by the Special Operations Executive (SOE) in South-East Asia during the Second World War to disguise the wearer's direction of travel, and hollow batteries used by MI6 agents to hide reels of miniature film.

Spies, Lies and Deception is open now at Imperial War Museum London and can be attended for free. The exhibition is due to run until 14 April 2024.

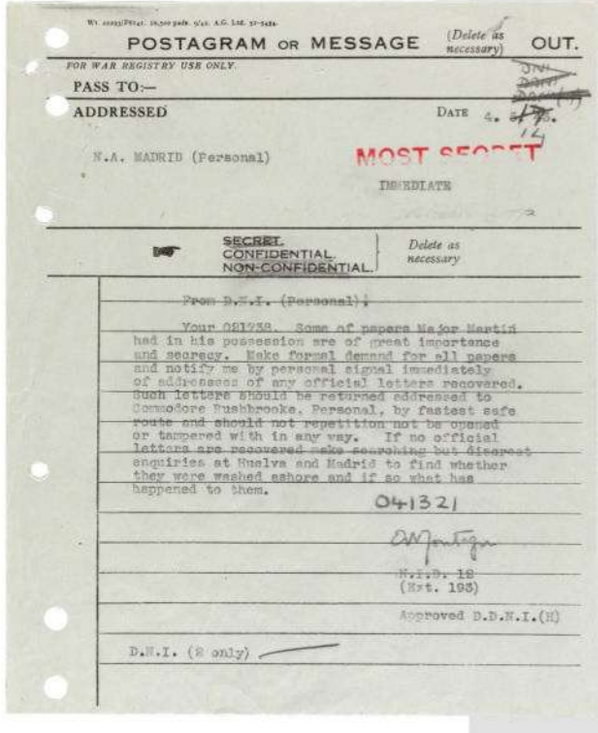
For more visit: www.iwm.org.uk

Footprint overshoes like this were created for Special Operations Executive (SOE) agents operating in South-East Asia during the Second World War to disguise the wearer's footprints

***Above:** Special Operations Executive (SOE) agent Noor Inayat Khan. After being captured in occupied France, she was executed at Dachau concentration camp*

***Left:** A box of matches containing one match specially adapted for writing secret messages used during the Second World War*

***Right:** A decoy 'Most Secret' message from Ewen Montagu to the naval attaché in Madrid asking him to recover papers of "great importance and secrecy" from the body of 'Major Martin', as part of Operation Mincemeat*



POSTAGRAM OR MESSAGE (Delete as necessary) OUT.

FOR WAR REGISTRY USE ONLY.

PASS TO:—

ADDRESSED

DATE 4.

N.A. MADRID (Personal)

MOST SECRET

IMMEDIATE

SECRET. CONFIDENTIAL. NON-CONFIDENTIAL. Delete as necessary

From D.N.I. (Personal).

Your 021738. Some of papers Major Martin had in his possession are of great importance and secrecy. Make formal demand for all papers and notify me by personal signal immediately of addressees of any official letters recovered. Such letters should be returned addressed to Commodore Cruickshanks, Personal, by fastest safe route and should not repetition not be opened or tampered with in any way. If no official letters are recovered make compelling but discreet enquiries at Huelva and Madrid to find whether they were washed ashore and if so what has happened to them.

041321

Ewen Montagu

N.I.D. 18 (Ext. 193)

Approved D.D.N.I.(H)

D.N.I. (S only)

Images © IWM Featured in Spies, Lies and Deception at IWM London

Visit the redeveloped Bletchley Park

Historic buildings at the WWII codebreaking unit are open to the public for the first time

Any visitor to Bletchley Park over recent years will have seen the vast amount of work being carried out to transform the site. This £13 million redevelopment project, the largest in Bletchley Park's history, has now been completed, expanding the range of experiences that visitors can enjoy.

The project was divided into three phases. The most recently completed phase has seen the refurbishment of Block E, which was Bletchley's communications hub. The building now serves as a learning space, including the 250-seat Fellowship Auditorium, where talks will be given inspiring and teaching people about the ongoing relevance of Bletchley Park's codebreakers. Meanwhile, the first phase of the project saw the refurbishment of Block A to host The Intelligence Factory and a temporary exhibition space, which is constantly being updated. Finally, Phase Two of the redevelopment completed the new Collection Centre that houses the 420,000 items that contribute to Bletchley Park's exhibitions.

The redevelopment project has transformed Bletchley Park. CEO Iain Standen says: " Buildings that were once closed off are now full of life, whether with visitors exploring exhibitions, researchers studying our rich archives, or learners enjoying our award-winning learning programme."

Image © Bletchley Park Trust

Image © Crown copyright, kind permission, Director GCHQ

***Top right:** An image of The Intelligence Factory, Bletchley's largest permanent exhibition, where visitors can experience what it was like to work at Bletchley Park*

***Right:** A wartime photograph of typists working in Block E's Cipher Office*

For more information visit: www.bletchleypark.org.uk

Foe to Friend

Discover how the British soldiers stationed in Germany after the Second World War transitioned from conquerors to friends over 75 years

In the years following the Second World War, over a million British soldiers were stationed in Germany, a topic explored in the National Army Museum's new Foe to Friend exhibition. Just a few weeks prior to the troops' posting, Germany had been a bitter enemy of the United Kingdom, and soldiers were suddenly confronted with starving German families struggling to survive in ruined cities. During the Cold War, British Army personnel played a vital role in protecting West Germany against incursions from the east, while espionage operations were sent across the border into East Germany. As tensions cooled, the threat from the east was replaced with the ever-present danger of IRA bombings. This too passed, and the British Army continues to use bases in Germany as critical launching points for operations worldwide.

Meanwhile, at the heart of the world's geopolitical tensions, British Army families started a new home overseas fuelled by weißbier and bratwurst. The troops began their deployment as the foes of the German people, a reputation that was not helped by Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery's orders in March 1945 forbidding soldiers from fraternising with Germans. Soon this order was dropped and the army went from foe to friend, with soldiers integrating with German society.

Foe to Friend: The British Army in Germany Since 1945 is open at the National Army Museum and can be attended for free without booking. It is scheduled to run until September 2024.

***Left:** The tunic and medals of anti-aircraft artilleryman Lance-Corporal Marjorie Buy, who continued to serve in Germany after the war in the military government*

***Above:** Foe to Friend runs chronologically from post-war reconstruction to the British soldiers stationed at bases in Germany today*

For more information visit: www.nam.ac.uk

Images: National Army Museum

WWII THIS MONTH...

JANUARY 1944

To commemorate 80 years since the Second World War, **History of War** will be taking a look at some of the key events taking place during each month of the conflict

Winston Churchill and Charles de Gaulle meet in Marrakech, 12 January 1944

BOMBING OF BERLIN ESCALATES

Throughout January 1944, the bombing of Berlin intensified, making a quarter of the capital's homes uninhabitable. New Year's Day saw the first 1944 strike on Berlin, with 421 Allied aircraft bombing the city. Further raids destroyed Berlin's railway system and damaged crucial administrative buildings, including the Reich Chancellery. The largest attack of all came on 19 January when the British dropped 2,300 tons of bombs in just half-an-hour. The month's destruction ended overnight on 28 January with a devastating concentrated air raid on Berlin's western and southern districts.

Images © Getty

NEGOTIATIONS ON A CONTINENTAL INVASION

A strong relationship between Churchill and Charles de Gaulle began when Britain recognised and funded the Free French government in exile. They remained close throughout the war, with Churchill bringing de Gaulle into the fold when discussions of continental liberation began. The two leaders met in Marrakech on 12 January to talk about French participation in the upcoming campaign and the establishment of a provisional government in France after the war. But the relationship broke down after de Gaulle was left out of plans for a Normandy landing, and he sought to inspire independent resistance instead. He made an impassioned call to arms via the BBC in June, which was criticised by Dwight D Eisenhower as a "premature activation".

Bombs being loaded onto a Wellington Mk1 medium bomber

LENINGRAD SIEGE BROKEN

January 1944 was the month the Siege of Leningrad finally ended after 872 days. The effort to break the siege began with the Leningrad-Novgorod Offensive, the first of Stalin's Ten Blows which expelled German forces from Soviet territory. Soon, a narrow corridor opened south of Lake Ladoga, a critical lifeline to get supplies into the city. With the encirclement ruptured, Soviet forces began to push outwards. The operation was successful and the Germans were forced between 37-62 miles (60-100km) from the city. Yet Leningraders continued to suffer years after the siege, with thousands of returning civilians killed by landmines.

German grenadiers take cover behind a ballast of earth on the day the Leningrad siege broke

US LAUNCHES ATTACK ON THE GUSTAV LINE

The Gustav Line was a coast-to-coast fortification south of Rome, barring the way to the capital for the US 5th Army in the east and British 8th Army in the west. It was constructed as part of the Winter Line commanded by Albert Kesselring, focussing on the village and monastery of Monte Cassino, through which Highway 6 to Rome runs. The Allies' attempt to break through the line began on 4 January when the 5th Army launched an assault along a ten-mile (16km) front on the southwest of the line.

German troops repair a tank under fire while defending the Gustav Line

BATTLE OF MONTE CASSINO

The most strategic point on the Gustav Line was the historic monastery Monte Cassino, founded in 529 by Benedict of Nursia. The Allies began their calamitous assault in mid-January. They struggled under ceaseless artillery fire, with observation thought to be coming from the abbey, and dug-in Panzergrenadier divisions. To make matters worse, attempts to cross the Gari, Liri and Garigliano rivers were hampered by a lack of preparation, booby traps and flooding. It was not until May 1944 that Monte Cassino fell in a costly victory that weakened the Allies and left the monastery destroyed.

"IT WAS NOT UNTIL MAY 1944 THAT MONTE CASSINO FELL IN A COSTLY VICTORY THAT WEAKENED THE ALLIES"

Red Cross nurses watch as the Battle of Monte Cassino commences

REVIEWS

Our pick of the latest military history books and films

NAPOLEON

'WERE YOU THERE? NO? WELL SHUT THE F**K UP THEN!' RIDLEY SCOTT'S BIOPIC HAS PROVEN AS CONTROVERSIAL AS THE EMPEROR HIMSELF. NAPOLEONIC HISTORIAN DR ZACK WHITE GIVES HIS VIEW ON WHETHER THE BIG-SCREEN TREATMENT OF LE PETIT CAPORAL MEASURES UP

Director: Ridley Scott **Starring:** Joaquin Phoenix, Vanessa Kirby, Tahar Rahim **Released:** Out now

Ridley Scott's biopic of Napoleon Bonaparte was as divisive as the man it portrays, before it even hit the cinemas in November. This film was hotly anticipated, and for good reason. Scott has a reputation for visually spectacular movies and has good form when it comes to this period of history thanks to his 1977 debut, *The Duellists*. Few experts of the period realistically expected a two-hour 38-minute film to do justice to someone as prolific and complex as Napoleon. However, the prospect of the period receiving the 'big-screen treatment' generated considerable excitement among historians and enthusiasts alike. Or rather it had, until Scott made the comment quoted above.

Historical inaccuracy is to be expected in film. Its function as a genre is to entertain, not educate. A movie should act as a gateway, inspiring interest in the period and encouraging cinema goers to learn a little more because they had a good time. The trouble is, this film fails to achieve that goal.

While there is plenty of action, the battles are little more than bar brawls, showing no tactical awareness. "Take their position on the high ground," bellows Joaquin Phoenix in his role as the emperor, only for the infantry to charge downhill into the melee that has developed in the valley below. As if to reinforce this sloppy approach to consistency and script-writing, Phoenix then proclaims: "Cavalry, cut off their retreat." The film promptly cuts to cavalry following the infantry by charging straight into the seething mass. The scenes depicting the Battle of Waterloo are even more farcical. Trenches, which were conspicuously absent in the real battle, create an air of 'Waterloo on the Somme', while Scott has decided to give one of his soldiers a rifle with a telescope strapped to it in something resembling a Napoleonic *Call of Duty*.

"IN THIS FILM NAPOLEON IS MORE CARICATURE THAN EMOTIONALLY COMPLEX LEADER OF FRANCE, COMING ACROSS AS A LOVESTRUCK TEENAGER"

Such failures could be forgiven in the name of entertainment if the characters themselves had depth. But in this film Napoleon is more caricature than emotionally complex leader of France, coming across as a lovestruck teenager

Images: Alamy

scarcely in control of his emotions. Phoenix and Vanessa Kirby do their best with a poor script in their portrayals of Napoleon and Josephine. From meme-worthy lines like "You [the British] think you're great because you have boats" and "Destiny has brought me this lamb chop", to Napoleon trying to seduce Josephine by grunting at her like a pig, there is an air of unintentional comedy about the film. The one-sided nature of the passion in their early relationship does come across well, but the film leads the audience to the conclusion that jealousy, rather than love, was the tenet of their relationship.

It is important to acknowledge that trying to tell the life of anyone in such a short space of time was always going to be an insurmountable challenge. It is understandable that jumps had to be made. The Italian campaigns and the campaigns of 1813 and 1814 are sad victims of that necessity, but the manner in which the main events are sewn together often feels trivial. Napoleon is forced to abdicate to Elba after the disastrous campaign in Russia "because he lost the army". Italy is described as having fallen to Napoleon "without a fight". Most problematic, though, is the suggestion that Josephine was Napoleon's sole motivation in life. Such a theme does a disservice to the man's complexity, the breadth of his vision and the scale of his achievements, as well as belittling the complex game of three-dimensional chess that he played as warrior and statesman while seeking to dominate Europe.

Scott's bombastic dismissal of the challenging work that historians do therefore appears to have been a case of him 'getting his retaliation in first' to defend a film which might be better framed as historical fantasy than a biopic.

There are flashes of genuine brilliance, however. Scott amply demonstrates his skill at creating visual spectacles and has clearly drawn from the iconic paintings of Napoleon to produce some beautiful sets. The scenes depicting Napoleon's coronation, the charge of the French cavalry at Waterloo and Napoleon in Egypt are all clearly influenced by the artwork of the period, and the costume department has generally done a superb job. As an exercise in turning period paintings into film, Scott has surpassed all expectations.

Equally, there are moments where the emotion leaps off the screen. The best of these is Napoleon's return from Elba, when he was confronted by troops with orders to arrest him. In a voice dripping with emotion, Phoenix beseeches his men to join him, creating a scene that elicits sympathy from even the most ardent Bonaparte-sceptic. Yet these moments are a sad reminder of the opportunity that has been squandered here. Napoleon's life lends itself to a litany of such scenes and their absence creates confusion, leading the viewer to question why literally millions of men were willing to follow Napoleon on campaigns across Europe.

This lack of soul is perhaps the film's greatest failing. Whatever your views on Napoleon, it is impossible to deny that his story generates a myriad of emotions: awe at his achievements; disgust at his narcissism; fear of unbridled power and ambition; empathy for his losses. Napoleon's story is one that excites passion – that is partly why we continue to talk about his life and legacy. Yet this film does little to instil that same passion in its viewers. It is hard to leave the cinema with any appreciation of what he achieved, his meteoric rise to power, his megalomania, his skill as a warrior and administrator. *Napoleon* has managed to do what few would have believed possible: retelling one of history's most compelling stories in a way that leaves us struggling to care. **ZW**

NAUTILUS TO COLUMBIA

70 YEARS OF THE US NAVY'S NUCLEAR SUBMARINES

Author: James C Goodall **Publisher:** Osprey Publishing
Price: Hardcover £56.57; Kindle £40.73 **Released:** Out now

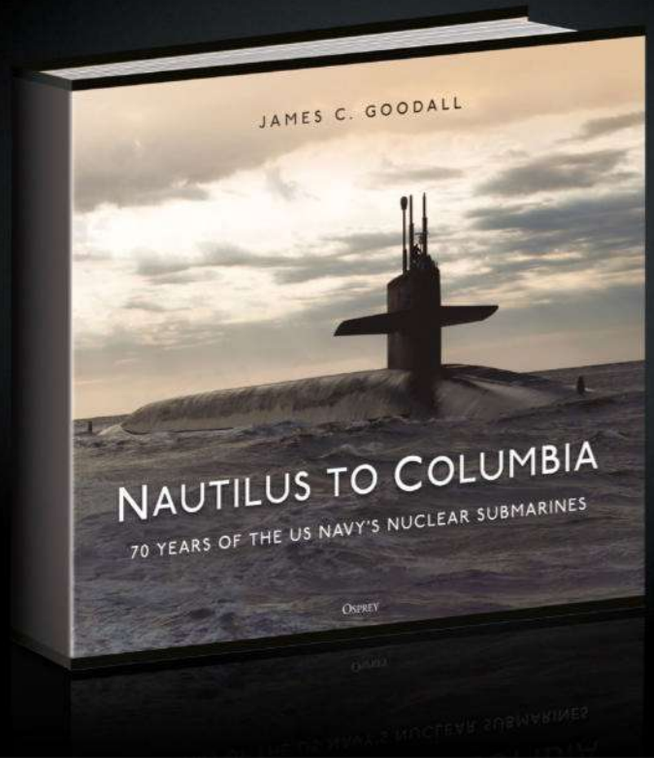
THE US NAVY'S FORMIDABLE NUCLEAR SUBMARINE FORCE IS EXAMINED LIKE NEVER BEFORE IN A SINGLE COMPREHENSIVE VOLUME

Author James C Goodall takes a deep dive into the history, rationale, service record and future raison d'etre for the US Navy's nuclear submarine fleet in this painstakingly researched work. Newly released, *Nautilus to Columbia: 70 Years of the US Navy's Nuclear Submarines*, has already assumed its rightful place among the definitive accounts of modern military hardware, capabilities and challenges.

From the earliest days of the US Navy's nuclear warship research and development, Admiral Hyman G Rickover was the driving force, and Goodall pays tribute to the pivotal role played by the acerbic Rickover who rightfully earned the title of 'Father of the Nuclear Navy'. He further describes the early triumph of the USS Nautilus (SSN-571), the world's first operational nuclear-powered submarine, which took to the sea in 1955, through the tragedies of the USS Thresher (SSN-593) and USS Scorpion (SSN-589), to the cutting-edge of nuclear submarine design and anticipated deployment of the Columbia class, which is still in development and expected to enter service in 2031.

Along the way, the author presents a crisp and efficient narrative describing each nuclear submarine commissioned in the long history of the nuclear navy, which spans nearly seven decades. He describes the principal types, including the fast-attack (SSN) and fleet ballistic missile (SSBN) submarines that form one of three legs of the US nuclear defence triad.

Goodall provides succinct descriptions of the submarines along with their nuclear propulsion systems, armament and capabilities, while this chronicle is richly illustrated and contributes handsomely to the Osprey line of outstanding military reference books. **MH**



CONFLICT

THE EVOLUTION OF WARFARE FROM 1945 TO UKRAINE

A RENOWNED BATTLEFIELD COMMANDER AND AN OUTSTANDING HISTORIAN COLLABORATE ON AN INSIGHTFUL ANALYSIS OF MODERN WARFARE

Authors: General David Petraeus and Andrew Roberts
Publisher: William Collins **Price:** £25 (Hardback) **Released:** Out now

Nearly eight decades have passed since the end of the Second World War, a period in which the world has arguably suffered a greater number of battlefield conflicts than in any comparable time in history. Since 1945, when former belligerent countries were striving to heal the wounds of five years of carnage, armies in Europe and elsewhere around the globe have been engaged in fighting between Arabs and Israelis, wars in Korea and Vietnam, two conflicts in the Gulf, hostilities in the Balkans in the former Yugoslavia, and Soviet and later NATO coalition engagements in Afghanistan, not to overlook numerous guerrilla clashes in Africa and South America.

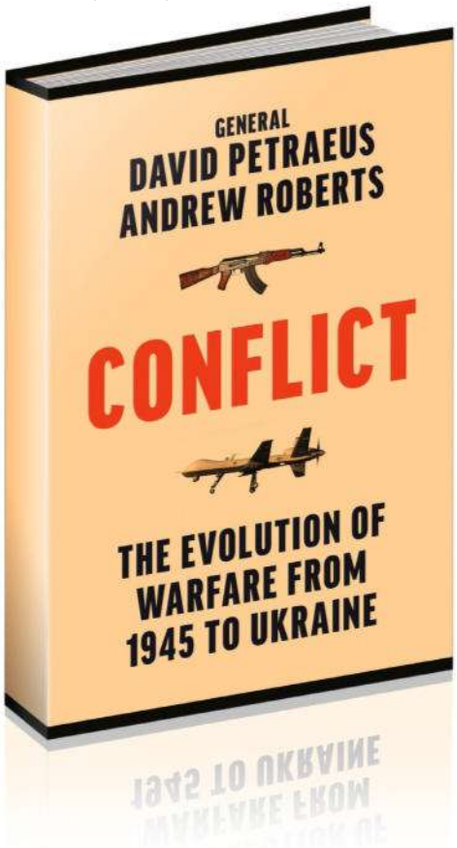
General David Petraeus, the former CIA director who commanded the US-led coalitions in Iraq and Afghanistan, in collaboration with distinguished historian Andrew Roberts, offer in their book a deep and incisive analysis of this ongoing warfare, set against a probe into the repeated critical mistakes of the past.

Rather than present a comprehensive listing of conflicts since 1945, the authors have set out to show how militaries around the world have learnt, or failed to learn, from previous wars when trying to fashion the means to fight the next. They also investigate the personal qualities needed for successful strategic leadership. The book offers a chronological account of how warfare has evolved since the end of the Second World War. This takes the reader up to an analysis of the Russo-Ukrainian War, highlighting areas that provide clues as to what armed conflict might look like in the future.

The first chapter, aptly titled *The Death of a Dream of Peace on Earth*, inspired by the founding of the United Nations, shows how this post-1945 vision was shattered within just five years by the outbreak of the Korean War. This event changed warfare by proving that limited war could be fought under MAD (mutually assured destruction) and introducing the US to many of the problems it was to face in Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan and other fields of international conflict.

In examining the invasion of Ukraine, the narrative reveals how Vladimir Putin is solely to blame for launching the most consequential war in recent times. Volodymyr Zelensky's role in the critical task of strategic leadership reflects how the two leaders diverge. Putin's offences to date failed because his strategy was flawed; Zelensky, on the other hand, has learnt on the job and pulled off some extraordinary strategic coups. Petraeus and Roberts maintain that Russia's performance in the first year of this war "will be taught in staff colleges around the world for decades to come as providing a masterclass on how not to fight a war".

In their scrutiny of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, the authors underscore the appalling toll on civilian communities and hence the need to deter war wherever possible. The key is to ensure that a potential adversary is aware of the Western powers' capabilities and their willingness to deploy those capabilities. The US and its allies must transform their fighting forces in terms of the reach, resilience, survivability, lethality, speed and intelligence of their modern weaponry and systems. **JS**



LAWRENCE OF ARABIA

ADVENTURER, SOLDIER AND SCHOLAR, THOMAS EDWARD LAWRENCE IS A HEROIC FIGURE WHO'S BROUGHT TO LIFE HERE BY THE 'WORLD'S GREATEST LIVING EXPLORER'

Author: Sir Ranulph Fiennes
Publisher: Penguin Michael Joseph
Price: £25 (Hardback)
Released: Out now

Sir Ranulph Fiennes is no stranger to warfare in the arid territories in which his biographical subject, Thomas Edward Lawrence, the famed Lawrence of Arabia, played out his epic life. Nearly six decades ago, while serving in the Royal Scots Greys and longing to see action, Fiennes received a letter from a major in his regiment suggesting he apply to join the desert patrols in unexplored regions of Oman.

The man acclaimed in the *Guinness Book of Records* as "the world's greatest living explorer" was immediately excited by the prospect of following in the footsteps of Lawrence of Arabia, who had commanded Arab tribes against the Turks. Here was an opportunity to fight side-by-side with Arabs in a far-distant land. "Like TE Lawrence, I led an Arab platoon in a fight for their country," says the author of this authoritative and highly enjoyable narrative of a legendary British soldier. The book brings to light the deep affection Lawrence felt for the Arab people. Living with them in the desert, he came to envy their simple existence, cut off from the materialism and self-interest of the West and he was determined to protect this at all costs. Lawrence eventually became so committed to the Arab culture and their cause that he envisaged difficulty in returning to an English way of life, as he once expressed in a letter to his mother.

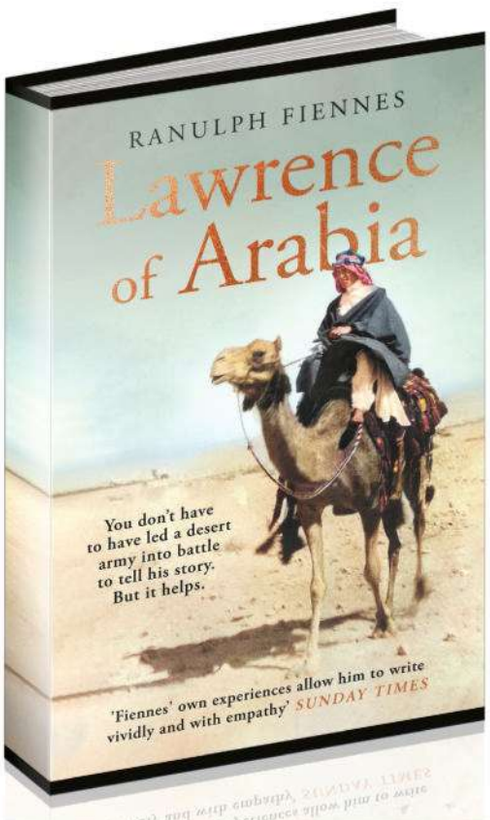
Adventurer, soldier and scholar, at the age of 22 Lawrence was already developing a fascination with the desert people.

"HE REMAINS A SYMBOL OF OPPOSITION TO REPRESSION AND OF HOW ONE MAN'S DREAM CAN ACHIEVE MIRACLES AGAINST ALL ODDS"

In 1910, he set out alone on a walking tour of Syria. The following year he joined a British Museum archaeological expedition to Mesopotamia. He remained in the Arab regions for four years, learning colloquial Arabic and embarking on trips into the surrounding area. With the outbreak of the First World War, Lawrence joined the Arab forces under Feisal al Husain and promoted their revolt against Turkish domination. The famed Lawrence of Arabia had become a reality.

Back in England, Lawrence was approaching the age of 50 when he found himself at a crossroads in his life. Fiennes explains that he was wearied by his adventures and the hardships of travel and believed the active part of his life was at an end. "The only thing that seemed to occupy him was his Triumph motorcycle," the author says. A barely concealed death-wish led him to motorbike along country roads at high speeds and without a crash helmet. His end came, predictably, in a crash when he swerved to avoid two cyclists crossing the road.

Fiennes is well aware that he is not alone in his admiration of the life and exploits of Lawrence of Arabia. He points out that more than 300 books have been written about his subject yet, as he emphasises, none has managed to identify definitively what made the man. There is, however, no doubt in the author's mind as to what Lawrence had achieved: "He remains a symbol of opposition to repression and of how one man's dream can achieve miracles against all odds." **JS**


RANULPH FIENNES
Lawrence of Arabia
You don't have to have led a desert army into battle to tell his story. But it helps.
'Fiennes' own experiences allow him to write vividly and with empathy' SUNDAY TIMES

A FORGOTTEN MAN

IN THIS CHILLING ADAPTION OF THOMAS HÜRLIMANN'S PLAY, HAUNTED DIPLOMAT HEINRICH ZWYGART RETURNS FROM BERLIN TO A NEW SWITZERLAND IN 1945

Director: Laurent Nègre **Production company:** Sovereign Films **Released:** Out now

"The only thing to fear from the past is that it will destroy the future," ambassador Heinrich Zwygart, based on the controversial Swiss diplomat Hans Frölicher, says as he burns images of his time in Berlin. Yet Zwygart's attempts to remove himself from the past fail, and he returns to a country that wants to forget its challenging neutral past and a family which became relatively impoverished during his near decade-long absence.

Zwygart is frustrated by his failed attempts to pull himself back into the higher echelons of Swiss political life, becoming a symbol of the close relationship between the Third Reich and Switzerland that the new political establishment is keen to forget. He is the epitome of the band of Third Reich sympathisers who positioned themselves close to Germany in the expectation of Nazi victory.

Yet Zwygart is most troubled by his lack of intervention to prevent the beheading of Hitler's would-be assassin Maurice Bavaud, who the real Frolicher publicly denounced. Zwygart's actions are brought to the fore by difficult questions asked by his daughter's student journalist boyfriend, a meeting with Bavaud's mother and, most terrifyingly, encounters with Bavaud's malevolent spirit.

Perhaps a reflection for the fate that could have awaited Switzerland had it failed to shift so effectively in support of the victorious Allies, the film ends with Zwygart forgotten by his family and former colleagues, left in a beautiful but lonely country house with only his demons for company. Meanwhile, the raising of a tattered Swiss flag represents a country that has moved on from its Nazi sympathising path.

"It seems to me essential to look history in the face, to offer the viewer a fascinating confrontation with the national past," reflects *A Forgotten Man*'s director Laurent Nègre. The film has been nominated for awards at Solothurn Film Festival, Zurich Film Festival and the Swiss Film Awards. It was released in the UK to coincide with Remembrance Sunday and is out now. **LH**

Images: Sovereign Films

DISCOVER THE STORY OF THE BRUTAL BATTLE FOR NAZI GERMANY'S CAPITAL

With his plans crumbling around him in March 1945, Hitler now faced inevitable defeat. Discover how the Allies brought an end to the war in Europe and the downfall of history's most infamous dictator

NEW
FALL OF BERLIN
HOW THE ALLIES' BRUTAL AND BLOODY OFFENSIVE BROUGHT AN END TO THE WAR IN EUROPE
INSIDE
INCREDIBLE IMAGES, IN-DEPTH STORIES & DETAILED BATTLE MAPS
HITLER'S DEMISE
THE DOWNFALL OF NAZI GERMANY AND HISTORY'S MOST INFAMOUS DICTATOR
STALINGRAD SIEGE
HOW THE SOVIETS WENT FROM THE BRINK TO TURN THE TIDE OF THE WAR
RACE TO BERLIN
EXPLORE THE BATTLE TO BE THE FIRST TO TAKE THE GERMAN CAPITAL
From the makers of HISTORY WAR
HISTORY OF WAR FALL OF BERLIN

ON SALE NOW

FUTURE

Ordering is easy. Go online at:

magazinesdirect.com

Or get it from selected supermarkets & newsagents

NEXT MONTH

'THE MIGHTY EIGHTH' AMERICA'S BOMBER COMMAND

Inside the USA's first air campaign against Nazi Germany and the incredible story of the 'Bloody 100th' Bombardment Group, who inspired the *Masters of the Air*

ON SALE 18 JANUARY

© Getty

HISTORY OF WAR

Future PLC Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA

Editorial
Editor-in-Chief **Tim Williamson**
timothy.williamson@futurenet.com
Senior Designer **Curtis Fermor-Dunman**
Production Editor **Iain Noble**
Senior Art Editor **Duncan Crook**
Staff Writer **Louis Hardiman**

Contributors
Alex Bowers, Stuart Hadaway, Michael E Haskew, Dr Robert Lyman, Nick Soldinger, Jules Stewart, Dr Zack White

Photography
Alamy, Rocío Espín Piñar, Nicholas Forder, Getty

All copyrights and trademarks are recognised and respected

Advertising
Media packs are available on request
UK Commercial Director **Clare Dove**
clare.dove@futurenet.com
Advertising Sales Director **Lara Jaggon**
lara.jaggon@futurenet.com
07515 961911
Account Manager **Jagdeep Maan**
jagdeep.maan@futurenet.com
0330 390 6532

International Licensing
History of War is available for licensing and syndication. To find our more contact us at licensing@futurenet.com or view our available content at www.futurecontenthub.com.
Head of Print Licensing **Rachel Shaw**
licensing@futurenet.com

Subscriptions
Subscription delays: Disruption remains within the UK and international delivery networks. Allow 7 days before contacting us about late delivery at **help@magazinesdirect.com**
New subscribers: **www.magazinesdirect.com**
Renewal: **www.mymagazine.co.uk**
Phone orders: **0330 333 1113**
Customer service: **0330 333 4333**
Consumer Revenues Director **Sharon Todd**

Circulation
Head of Newstrade **Ben Oakden**

Production
Head of Production **Mark Constance**
Production Project Manager **Clare Scott**
Advertising Production Manager **Joanne Crosby**
Digital Editions Controller **Jason Hudson**
Production Manager **Nola Cokely**

Management
SVP Consumer **Kevin Addley**
Commercial Finance Director **Tom Swayne**
Managing Director **Dave Clutterbuck**
Head of Art & Design **Greg Whitaker**

Printed by William Gibbons & Sons Ltd

Distributed by Marketforce, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5HU www.marketforce.co.uk For enquiries please email: mfcommunications@futurenet.com

ISSN 2054-376X

We are committed to only using magazine paper which is derived from responsibly managed, certified forestry and chlorine-free manufacture. The paper in this magazine was sourced and produced from sustainable managed forests, conforming to strict environmental and socioeconomic standards.

All contents © 2023 Future Publishing Limited or published under licence. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be used, stored, transmitted or reproduced in any way without the prior written permission of the publisher. Future Publishing Limited (company number 2008885) is registered in England and Wales. Registered office: Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA. All information contained in this publication is for information only and is, as far as we are aware, correct at the time of going to press. Future cannot accept any responsibility for errors or inaccuracies in such information. You are advised to contact manufacturers and retailers directly with regard to the price of products/services referred to in this publication. Apps and websites mentioned in this publication are not under our control. We are not responsible for their contents or any other changes or updates to them. This magazine is fully independent and not affiliated in any way with the companies mentioned herein.

If you submit material to us, you warrant that you own the material and/or have the necessary rights/permissions to supply the material and you automatically grant Future and its licensees a licence to publish your submission in whole or in part in any/all issues and/or editions of publications, in any format published worldwide and on associated websites, social media channels and associated products. Any material you submit is sent at your own risk and, although every care is taken, neither Future nor its employees, agents, subcontractors or licensees shall be liable for loss or damage. We assume all unsolicited material is for publication unless otherwise stated, and reserve the right to edit, amend, adapt all submissions.

History of War (ISSN 2054-376X USPS 23835) is published monthly with an extra issue in October by Future Publishing, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA, UK. The US annual subscription price is $171.60. Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named World Container Inc. 150-15, 183rd St, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn NY 11256 POSTMASTER: Send address changes to History of War, Air Business Ltd, c/o World Container Inc 150-15, 183rd St, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA. Subscription records are maintained at Future Publishing, c/o Air Business Subscriptions, Rockwood House, Perrymount Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 3DH. UK

Widely Recycled

IPSO Regulated

FUTURE
Connectors. Creators. Experience Makers.

Future plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FUTR)
www.futureplc.com

Chief Executive Officer **Jon Steinberg**
Non-Executive Chairman **Richard Huntingford**
Chief Financial and Strategy Officer **Penny Ladkin-Brand**

Tel +44 (0)1225 442 244

WATERLOO GLOVE

Captain Thomas Wildman's glove, stained by the Earl of Uxbridge's blood, is a reminder of the brutality of the Napoleonic Wars

Captain Thomas Wildman served as an aide-de-camp (ADC) for Henry William Paget, the Earl of Uxbridge, during the Battle of Waterloo, 18 June 1815. During this period, each British general officer was permitted to have at least one ADC, acting as a personal assistant, secretary and confidant. Wildman was splattered with blood while at Uxbridge's bedside, helping with the procedure to amputate the officer's leg, shattered by French artillery.

At Waterloo, Uxbridge was in command of 13,000 cavalry and 44 guns. He led multiple charges at Napoleon's infantry, with reportedly nine horses shot from under him. Fighting valiantly until the end of the battle, a deadly canister shot from one of the last French cannons fired that day struck him. The shot, one of several small metal balls that had been densely packed in a metal cylinder so that they would spread out when fired, narrowly missed the Duke of Wellington and shattered Uxbridge's knee.

With his leg horrifically wounded, Uxbridge was rushed to a surgeon, where his ADC Wildman used his handkerchief to help staunch the blood during the procedure. According to Wildman's account, Uxbridge was stoical throughout the operation. In a letter to his mother, he reported Uxbridge smiled and said: "I have had a pretty long run. I have been a beau these 47 years, and it would not be fair to cut the young men out any longer."

Despite his terrible injuries and blood loss, Uxbridge survived until 1854, when he died after a stroke. He continued to walk for the rest of his life using an artificial hinged leg invented by James Potts of Chelsea. Hyacinthe Joseph-Marie Paris buried the amputated leg in his grounds, which had been used by Uxbridge as a headquarters during the battle. Paris turned the site into a shrine, and the burial site became a tourist attraction.

Sophie Stathi, curator of the Conflict in Europe Gallery at the National Army Museum, says: "A stark reminder of the impact of battle, the blood-stained glove of Captain Wildman provides an insight on the intensity of fighting and the medical practices during the Battle of Waterloo."

***Right:** A portrait of Henry William Paget, Earl of Uxbridge, painted three years after the Battle of Waterloo*

"I HAVE HAD A PRETTY LONG RUN. I HAVE BEEN A BEAU THESE 47 YEARS, AND IT WOULD NOT BE FAIR TO CUT THE YOUNG MEN OUT ANY LONGER"

***Above:** Captain Thomas Wildman's bloodied glove, stained during the amputation of the Earl of Uxbridge's leg at the Battle of Waterloo*

NATIONAL ARMY MUSEUM

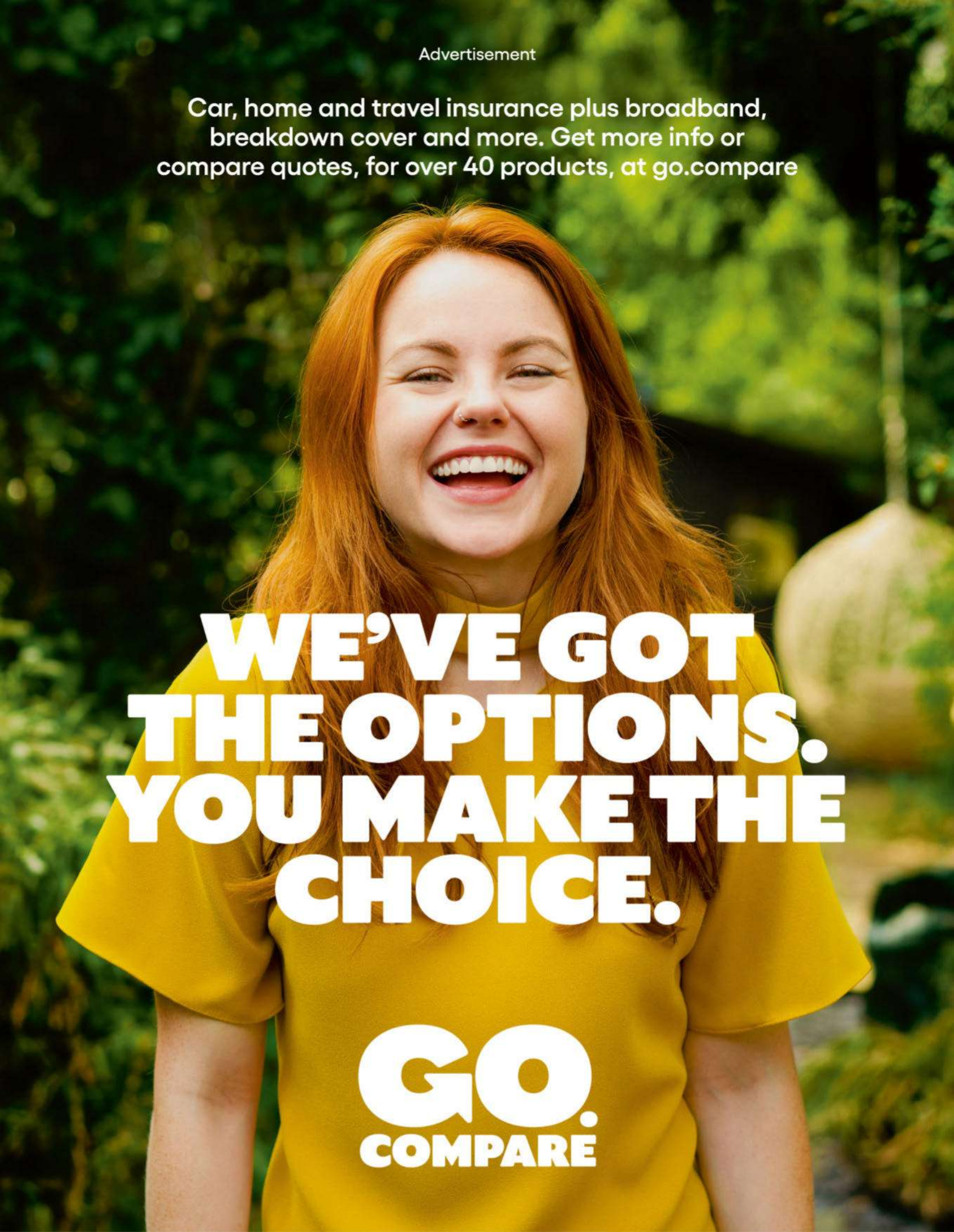
Captain Thomas Wildman's blood-stained glove is on display in the National Army Museum in Chelsea, London. It can be found in the Conflict in Europe gallery. The museum is open 10am to 5:30pm Tuesday to Sunday and is closed on Mondays.

For more information, visit: www.nam.ac.uk

Images: National Army Museum, Getty

Advertisement

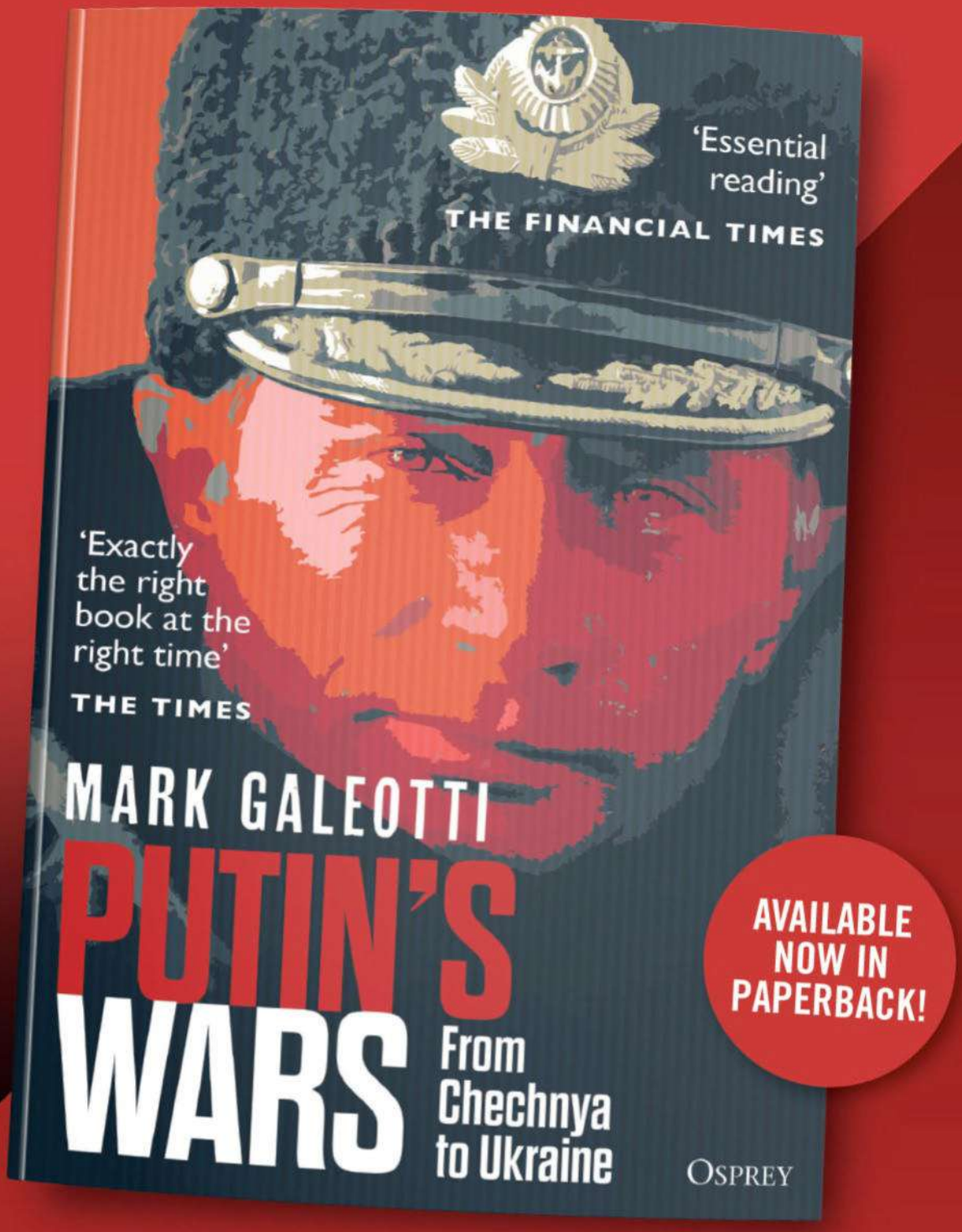
Car, home and travel insurance plus broadband, breakdown cover and more. Get more info or compare quotes, for over 40 products, at go.compare



'Exactly the right book at the right time.'
THE TIMES

THE FINANCIAL TIMES
BEST BOOKS OF 2022: POLITICS

'Essential reading for anyone with an interest in Russia's military.'
LITERARY REVIEW



AVAILABLE NOW IN PAPERBACK!

Updated to include both the aborted coup of June 2023 and a clear overview of how and why the Russian military has struggled in Ukraine, this is a thought-provoking history of how Putin and his wars have inexorably shaped Russia in the 21st century.

AVAILABLE TO PRE-ORDER FROM ALL GOOD BOOKSHOPS AND ONLINE AT WWW.OSPREYPUBLISHING.COM

9001
9000